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# DISSERTATION

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“‘[New Zealand] is not quite the moon, but after the moon it is the farthest place in the world,’” said Sir Karl Popper (as quoted in KING 2003: 415), Austrian-New Zealand-British philosopher; and ‘off the edge of the world’ in unlikely Kawakawa is where Friedensreich Hundertwasser built a colourful public toilet after having abandoned Austria for the sheep-crowded archipelago in the South Pacific.

Little did I know about New Zealand as a country, as a people, as a nation and – above all – about how to pen a doctoral dissertation when I set out on this scientific journey a little while ago. At a very early stage of my doctoral endeavours, I knew my inquisitiveness could not be satisfied with the holdings at the University of Vienna, Austria, a country on the opposite side of the earth of the country’s literature that I had chosen as subject of investigation. I was lucky enough to call Aotearoa/New Zealand my home for six months in 2009 – a sojourn that proved most fecund to my work, provided me with an abundance of motivation, and left me awe-inspired by the country’s inhabitants – scholars, fishermen, tattooists – its natural beauty and its rich and colourful culture. I was able to spend most of my time in the immense libraries of New Zealand’s universities and in conversation with scholars and authors who so very openly supported my work and provided answers where clarity had yet been missing.

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## TOEING THE LINE - STARTING POINTS

### FINISHING LINE – AIMS, GOALS, TARGETS

To begin with, a kiwi is a little brown bird, flightless that is, native to New Zealand. Second, a kiwi is the little brown New Zealand version of the Chinese gooseberry, grown in abundance in the South Pacific archipelago. Thirdly and most importantly, the term *kiwi* has been the unofficial, non-state-approved denotation of New Zealanders and their national affiliation since World War I, perhaps for the lack of a catchier adjectival formation. Colourful as a denotation, *kiwi* remains a highly disputed term concerning its exclusivity of certain gender, ethnicity and class. The last two decades especially have revealed feminist and postcolonial anxiety about the inflationary usage of the umbrella term when in cultural history and produce, all that have referred to themselves as “Kiwis” were male, middle-class and Pākehā (white New Zealanders). Since this dissertation aims to investigate not only one way of being male, but diverse expressions of masculinity in New Zealand including Māori, who are tightly interlaced in the processes of identity formation within the nation-state, the term *kiwi* unfortunately proves useless in these specific cases. Effective forthwith, in light of the political controversy around the essentialising term *kiwi*, the more intricate but indeed less disputed adjective *New Zealand* is mainly used throughout this work. I will employ *kiwi* when it conveys its svelte meaning of male, middle-class and Pākehā, and where suitable, the term *Aotearoa* will specify national and political issues in New Zealand bicultural context.

In her seminal writing *Bananas, Beaches & Bases* Cynthia Enloe claimed that colonialism and nationalism both equally spring from “masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope” (ENLOE 1990: 44). This assumption is

the premise for my thesis: I will analyse the multiple representations of (male) masculinities in New Zealand short stories by male authors and will show in what ways their performances are linked to New Zealand cultural identity and national narration. Looking at the different ways New Zealand male authors imagine masculinities, my dissertation examines the linkages of what makes the performance of masculinities explicitly New Zealand, how they reproduce national identities, break with their established traditions and invent new formations. Showing that New Zealand masculinities are the effect of specific cultural and historical processes, my study explores different discursive positions of masculine gender identity in New Zealand short fiction. The New Zealand short story as 'national' genre will form the basis of my analyses, and out of the huge corpus I have decided on thirteen short stories by male writers from 1937 to 2007 to serve as primary texts. While literary analysis will be the point of departure, my study shall address a number of aspects of the disciplines of performance, gender and cultural identity studies rather than offer solely close-readings of the texts. I have chosen literary fictions and their characters, which as manifestations readily reveal the processes and power negotiations of New Zealand national and gender identity formation. As masculinities and identities have to constitutionally be treated in the plural, my aim is not to offer results in form of *the one and only* New Zealand masculinity, but rather to analyse the various pluralistic manifestations of masculine gender performativity as the results of New Zealand national identity formation.

Where now best to start a thesis on New Zealand national identity and masculinity, really, than to flick an image that was passed on through national as well as international media?

Richie McCaw, captain of New Zealand's very own All Blacks' national rugby football team, was captured in a moment of despair, disappointment and shame after the French national team had kicked out the New Zealanders in the quarter-finals



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of the 2007 Rugby World Cup. When Lyndsay Head states that New Zealanders "have no foundation mythology" (in KING 1991: 26) and when Mark Easterbrook so willingly acknowledges in his thesis that "sport, especially rugby, enjoys its central position in New Zealand culture because it serves as a substitute focus of national identity, making up for a lack of a truly defining historical moment" (EASTERBROOK 2001: 15), the knowing voyeur of this snap-shot sees in it a *cultural*

*summation* – New Zealand culture, politics and protocol within one visual depiction. Richie McCaw, marked by the sporting struggle for the top of the world, covers his face with his hands, hiding but simultaneously exposing his emotions to the viewers, the cameras, the reporters, to the nation. A man in disappointment and shame stands for a nation in disappointment and shame, as if a *pars pro toto*, an *unus pro omnibus*. *Toto* and *omnibus* depict of course not actual members of New Zealand's population but rather reflect their wish of togetherness, their idea of *sense of us*, their imagined community. Richie McCaw as the epitome of gutted *pars* of a national imaginary finds himself also in a most unwelcoming discourse of gender inequality: domestic violence. With the loss of New Zealand to France, women's refuges recorded an upsurge of calls and referrals (cf. for example *Times Online* October 11, 2007; *Sunday News Online* February 20, 2011). The political solution seems to be – and is indeed paradoxically so – women-only spaces at tournaments and low-fare taxis to ensure the safe return to their homely realms.

The political ignorance of earlier studies (most prominently: Bev James & Kay Saville-Smith 1989) that identified staying at home as more dangerous for women than going outside is a result of a gendered society in which domestic violence is an epitomised effect of a specifically gendered discourse. James and Saville-Smith denounce New Zealand society as being a destructively gendered culture in which the problematic effects of its genderedness, such as domestic violence against women and children, have a sadly accepted place.<sup>1</sup> Politics do not allow for an identification of the problem as a result of cultural genderedness and thus a solution is only given on the surface, never penetrating the core of the problem. Richie McCaw, bulky and able-bodied sportsman, also epitomises a legitimating for the whole gender order through making visible global corporation's interest: sponsorship as rendering an exemplary body a marketing tool and thus recreating and sustaining the intrinsic genderedness of the whole nation. Moreover, the male body as a site for emotions is specifically if not solely accepted within the arena of sport, as outside this gendered institution there exists the "commonplace that men have difficulty in expressing their feelings and [...] [t]he paradigmatic example of the bodily expression of emotion is, of course, the ability to shed tears or to weep in public" (MORGAN 1993: 85). Thus, traditionally and according to popular culture, men are deprived of this ability – they are *disabled* by their own culture. Richie McCaw's outburst of emotions happens within the safe arena of male sport; the masculine characteristic of emotional inexpressiveness is abrogated, and even though such conduct may result in negative sanctions outside of the given arena, here it may be safely mediated to the public – and the nation.

As will be visible throughout the historical overview and other chapters of this work, New Zealand cultural and national narration emphasises the "masculinity" of events, myths and discourses. By "masculinity of events" I mean the deliberate emphasis of the male experience of events and the male memory of said happen-

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<sup>1</sup> A senior police sergeant unaffectedly states that a loss at rugby matches is not uncommon to "trigger violence in homes, eliciting a 'kick the cat' mentality" (*Times Online* October 11, 2007).

ings. Events, myths and discourses are deployed specifically to bolster a gendered narration of said events. It is hardly surprising that this masculine accentuation is also apparent in the country's literary production, as has already been noticed by literary scholars such as Kai Jensen and Alistair Fox.

It is my intention in the introductory chapters to this thesis to establish a set of critical approaches from a combination of gender studies, performance studies and terminology and concepts of studies on national identity, which will enable New Zealand masculinities to be evaluated in a way that does full justice to the multiplicity of their form. The assumptive premise for this work is the thesis that the gender performativity of the male characters in the chosen short fictions are manifestations of specific cultural and historical processes and events. Thus, the masculinities – the actual performances – express their specific New Zealandness. In order to identify how the masculine performances of the chosen fictional characters in the short stories express New Zealand identity, the next two sub-chapters shall provide the necessary preparation as to cornerstones of the historical narration of Aotearoa/New Zealand (as a nation) and a brief, however imperative abridgement of the country's short fiction production.

The second introductory part of my thesis 'Conceptual Lenses' provides, as the title suggests, lenses – magnifying, selecting, dissecting-tools with which New Zealand masculinities shall be scrutinised. Like light bulbs they will shed light upon certain processes and will make them visible. Like a climbing rope they will link the masculinities together under the term New Zealand.

The main part of this work comprises the main chapters and actual analyses of my primary literature. It is divided into three sections: 'Imitating Tradition', 'Breaking Tradition' and 'Creating New Traditions'. 'Imitating Tradition' will show how the male characters in the short stories successfully reenact 'traditional' manifesta-

tions and trends; whereas in 'Breaking Tradition' the protagonists' behaviour is deviant from a perceived dominant discourse. The last part 'Creating New Traditions' deals with literary depictions that, rather independently from their predecessors, aim at creating new manifestations that, as I see it, will provide a futurity for New Zealand masculinities. While 'Creating New Traditions' is a relatively new process (post-1990), interestingly though, all three approaches to tradition (imitating, breaking and creating) exist simultaneously in New Zealand short story production. The structure of my work, therefore, does not suggest a chronology, but rather behavioural patterns that stand in opposition to each other contemporaneously.

## **HISTORY OF AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND – A GENDERED BUSINESS**

[C]ultures select what they transmit through memory and history.  
(ROACH 1995: 47)

"In Britain, the culture is dominated by a class motif. In New Zealand [...] it is a gender motif. [...] New Zealand is, what we term, a gendered culture." Thus deemed Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith (1989: 14, 7). Scholars and authors likewise have wrecked their brains as to why this might be the case. Frankly, genderedness of culture is not a result of cultural history that is particularly uncommon in Western societies and philosophy and does certainly not present itself as a unique case study in New Zealand. Culture and especially its histories and narrations, though, define the saturation, the colour, the sound and smell of its own genderedness. The humanities have taught us to regard gender reality as an actively constructed result of historical developments. As this work looks at culturally specific gender realities, there is indeed the need to take into account the nation's development and (hi)story.



Compelling are the New Zealand narratives and histories – nay myths! – that justify and uphold the state of gendered culture. Historical “facts” and pseudo-historical myths are strongly embedded within New Zealand everyday life, rituals, and means of identity formation. New Zealand’s gender identities and their performances today are resulting manifestations of gendered history and national narration, which, therefore, deserves attention at this point when I provide a basic overview of the nation’s history and emergence. As to historical “hard facts” to which I will attend first, I thoroughly trust in the information provided by the late, much admired historian Michael King in his 2003 Penguin tome *History of New Zealand*.

Little do we know about life on the archipelago before Polynesian settlers arrived at the shores of one of the three islands in the South Pacific that would later be onomatologically subsumed under the umbrella-invention “Aotearoa” (the long white cloud). As archaeological interpretation depends first and foremost on material findings and cultural evidence, there is no reason, archaeologically speaking, to presume there were any other people than Polynesians on the archipelago until white settlers “discovered” the land for the new world.

According to Māori and indeed Polynesian legend, the able-bodied and fervid Māui tamed the Sun and decided then, sitting in his canoe Te Waka-A-Māui (the canoe of Māui – the North Island), to haul up Te Ika-A-Māui (the fish of Māui), the South Island. Māui’s brothers scaled the giant fish which started to writhe in agony and created thus the South Island’s geological roughness. The South Island remains with several names: Te Waka-A-Aoraki (the canoe of Aoraki) and Te Wai Pounamu (the place of greenstone), to name two among many.

Scientific findings point to a settlement of the archipelago by Polynesians in the thirteenth century AD, most probably heading from the Marquesas via Tahiti and other East Polynesian islands. The prior existence of the so-called Moriori popula-

tion of the islands has been supported, but knowledge of this primordial Polynesian people remains scarce. In inconsistency with Māori myths of settlement in form of three to four great fleets, the three islands were explored by several groups landing on several jetties within a short period of time. Even nowadays Māori know how to trace their ancestry (whakapapa) back to the fleet, the canoe, they arrived with.

Settlement of the archipelago by Polynesians was encouraged by the country's resourcefulness. Only a century later, the native flightless ostrich-like moa was eaten up and the population had to adjust to the new lifestyle that required a tribal organisation and regional culture, a system that was to be maintained until very recently. Pre-settler Polynesians never saw themselves as one people – there was no concept of a 'national' or cultural togetherness:

Identity and worth were found in family and tribal connectedness, not in membership of a race or a people [...]. Identity was linked to both ancestry *and* place and was expressed through proverbs and waiata (songs) and patere (assertive chants) associated with one's people and their rohe or tribal territory. (KING 2003: 77)

Not much is known as to gender and sexuality before the white settlers arrived. King however reaffirms the strict gender distinctions in social practices during the pre-settler period (cf. KING 2003: 86-88).

In 1642, the competitive tribal life of the population was rippled by the arrival of Abel Tasman, who set first European eyes on the South Island's coast. He left one week later what he had named Murderers' Bay (today's Golden Bay) after first unlucky encounters with the inhabitants. For another 126 years, Polynesians and Europeans had no recorded convergence.

Lieutenant James Cook of the British Royal Navy reached “New Zeland” in 1769 on board the *Endeavour* together with his Tahitian ariki (noble, chief) Tupaia. Unlike Tasman, Cook and Joseph Banks understood the concept of bravado of the locals and soon established relations with them. Banks and Cook marked a 200-year lasting documentation of Māori language and culture by scientists, historians and anthropologists (cf. KING 2003: 104-6). Perhaps it was at the time of those encounters, that the Polynesian population began to refer to themselves as *tangata māori*, “ordinary people” (cf. KING 2003: 168), as opposed to *pākehā*, mythical creatures with fair skin and hair. The politicised Māori of today was initially only a word that meant ‘normal’ that then came to represent the collective tribal peoples of New Zealand.

Europe’s (fatal) impact on Polynesia had begun. Violent encounters between New Zealand Māori and Europeans worked to the advantage of the indigenous population as they triggered the decision to establish the British penal colony in ‘less martial’ Australia – demographic distinctions obvious; the first Europeans to live in New Zealand, the later called Pākehā Māori, were seamen who had jumped ship to get out of Sydney. Those few individuals integrated and wedded into Māori communities (cf. KING 2003: 113-4).

Sealing and whaling brought some Europeans to New Zealand during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. With them they brought muskets which were the reason for the sad efficiency of the countrywide and intertribal Musket Wars between 1822 and 1836. Until the 1840s, New Zealand remained nearly untouched by Europeans and was visited only by the sporadic trader or missionary. “New Zealand was pulled steadily towards a permanent and constitutional relationship with Britain” (KING 2003: 152) on the one hand, to protect the slowly growing British population in New Zealand and on the other hand, because northern tribes had twice sought British protection – from other tribes and the French (cf. KING 2003: 152-3). This approximation of the native Māori population to the

British Empire culminated in 1840 when the Treaty of Waitangi was put before a gathering of northern chiefs, a document that would “turn out to be the most contentious and problematic ingredient in New Zealand’s national life” (KING 2003: 156-7). According to the preamble, Queen Victoria announced that she wanted to protect the rights and property of the native Māori and therefore appoint a special governor to secure peace and order. They only had to a) surrender the rights of “sovereignty” over their lands to the crown, whereas at the same time they would b) be guaranteed to remain the possessors of their lands, although representatives of the queen could sell their territories; and for all that, the queen would c) offer them royal protection and bestow upon them all the rights of British subjects (cf. KING 2003: 158-9). Easily conceivable are the disputes that still roar over the different concepts of “sovereignty” and “possession” which at the time could be translated neither linguistically nor culturally into Māori protocol. The treaty between Māori and Pākehā, however, was signed by 45 chiefs and was proclaimed valid for all of New Zealand and her inhabitants. British colonisation

proceeded with all of the accoutrements implied by the term colonisation: transfer of people from one side of the globe to the other, exploitation of the country’s material resources for the benefit of both settlers and distant investors. In the words of the later Maori High Court Judge, Eddie Durie, *tangata whenua*, the people of the land, would now be joined by ‘*tangata tiriti*’, the people whose presence was authorised by the Treaty of Waitangi. And the face of New Zealand life would from that time on be a Janus one, representing at least two cultures and two heritages, very often looking in two different directions. (KING 2003: 166-7)

Hone Heke of Ngapuhi, the first chief to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, disgruntled by the effects of British colonisation started to hit back in what is called the Northern War amongst the New Zealand wars. Hone Heke’s second-in-command cut down the flagstaff at Kororareka which had been flying the Union Jack and not a Māori flag, as it was supposed to; his performance became an icon in Māori/Pākehā narration. Finally, though Heke made peace with the British, remaining undefeated, died from tuberculosis two years later (cf. KING 2003: 184-6).

Hunger, poverty and overpopulation in Europe brought a huge influx of settlers: Depression pushed the Scots down under; potato famines the Irish. “The attraction lay in the promise of prosperity and healthier environments, prospects for social advancement without the hurdles of a class system and, for investors, opportunities to enlarge capital” (KING 2003: 170). By the 1860s the Pākehā population outnumbered the Māori one, also thanks to the gold rushes (cf. KING 2003: 208). The nineteenth century saw several violent outbreaks of the New Zealand wars between Pākehā and Māori and sadly also intertribal, which did nothing much more than reduce the Māori population drastically. It was the late nineteenth century and its predominantly male immigrant population – a sex ratio of 66% to 34% in 1871 (KING 2003: 229) – that was to be the foundation stone of New Zealand longest and most strongly persisting myth of male culture, later to be named after the 1939 novel by John Mulgan that was said to epitomise the concept: *Man Alone*. Many codes of conduct, protocol and “scripts” for masculinity were forged then and are still visible today.

Māori could decide whether to send their children to schools established by the community or Anglophone board schools (cf. KING 2003: 233). The wonders of industrialisation, especially refrigeration, connected New Zealand to the rest of the world and made it less lost in the South Pacific (cf. KING 2003: 237). With Great Britain as a secure market and control organ of its colony’s trade, British sovereignty in New Zealand had reached its greatness.

There were, in effect, two New Zealands at this time: the Pakeha one, served and serviced by national and local government administration systems; and Maori New Zealand, served by a native schools system and little else, but ignored except when national or local government wanted to appropriate land, income [...] or manpower. (KING 2003: 245)

These inequalities based upon racial segregation are often overseen and (candy-coated) by the fact that New Zealand gave suffrage to Māori men in 1869 – “the first neo-European country in the world to give votes to its indigenous population”.

For that matter, New Zealand was also to be the first sovereign state in the world to give women the vote in 1893. This move, however, was motivated by the assumption that women would be traditionally conservative voters and would support the prohibition on the sale of alcohol (cf. KING 2003: 256, 265).

The loyalty of New Zealand to mother country Great Britain was thoroughly expressed through the willingness to participate in the battles of the Empire. The turn of the century, however, brought the rise of double patriotism.

One expression of it was the growing interest in New Zealand rugby teams that travelled abroad, as they did to the United Kingdom in 1888-89 (the New Zealand Native Team) and in 1905 (the first All Blacks). The pride in the victories of the latter, and the deep shock and discussion provoked by a controversial loss to Wales, suggested that a large part of the country's emerging identity would be invested in this particular sport, as it would be also in war. Another expression of similar feelings could be found in a modest first florescence of literature which revealed the beginnings of a sense of history. (KING 2003: 280)

The double jingoism – pride in being British and New Zealand, the will to be loyal on the one hand and establish narrations that were New Zealand in flavour – led to New Zealand being the first colony to volunteer a contingent in the South African War in 1899. New Zealand troopers, Pākehā and Māori fought “with distinction” and thus forged a military cornerstone upon which New Zealand would frame its national narration (cf. KING 2003: 284-8). The South African War also laid the foundation of the military connection of New Zealand and Australia, the ANZAC, an alliance that would epitomise at Gallipoli and North Africa in both World Wars. World War I brought New Zealand – by then the term “Kiwi” had come into use to refer to New Zealanders – to German Samoa and made them surrender their Pacific outpost in 1914. The entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war convoyed New Zealand troops to Egypt for training where they were joined by Australian forces, thus forging the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps: ANZAC (cf. KING 2003: 295). The ANZACs were transported to Gallipoli in order to clear the way for Brit-

ish and French troops to attack the Turks and ease the situation for the Russians. The campaign failed miserably due to bad planning and strategy and New Zealand recorded a staggering 88% casualty rate. The Battle of Gallipoli of 1916 went down into history as a traumatic national experience and is commemorated annually by a public holiday on April 25, Anzac Day (cf. KING 2003: 299). World War I left New Zealand shattered: 20% of manpower had been recruited; hardly any surname was not listed on the lists of killings. “The necessary myth evolved quickly [...] that they had ‘come of age’ on the slopes of Gallipoli” (KING 2003: 299).

The inter-war years saw a fertilisation of Māori culture as an effect of Māori cultural policies. Throughout the North Island, Māori meeting houses (marae) were built in large numbers and intertribal competition bloomed through Māori sports meetings and sharpening of the arts of oratory, waiata (song), and haka (war dance and chant). Māori health was improved and the numbers rose (cf. KING 2003: 338, 358).

The Depression hit New Zealand as the rest of Europe and its dominions; however, some people were able to avoid the obstacle course of those years. Contemporary witness and New Zealand’s first full-time writer to acquire the attribute *national*, Frank Sargeson, speaks of “‘Crusoe-like resourcefulness’” (cit. in KING 2003: 350) when he narrates of his fellow provincials, enacting what would become the Kiwi-dinkum attitude of “can-do”. *God Defend New Zealand* became the country’s national hymn in the late 1930s, opposed to the national anthem *God Save the King*, still reflecting the dominant cultural identification of Pākehā at this time with being “British” (cf. KING 2003: 361, 365). The arts revealed new national cravings through the literature of Sargeson, Charles Brasch, Roderick Finlayson, Denis Glover, Robin Hyde, and the like, who “stood in silhouette against the colonialist themes and preoccupations of the generation that preceded them, and against the Georgian ornateness of the writing of their predecessors” (KING 2003: 380). The so-called “settler nationalists” may be regarded as the first generation of New Zea-

land writers. Rugby, one of the national activity to which Māori were able to contribute, became a pillar of New Zealand male culture and means of national identification (cf. KING 2003: 386-7).

How surprising is it then that the only party to oppose New Zealand participation in World War II was the tiny New Zealand Communist Party. The first 6600 troops sailed for Egypt in 1940 to be encamped where their male relatives had trained for what was thought to be the Great War. This time, the Gallipoli of its era was to be the battle for Crete (cf. KING 2003: 391, 393, 397). Back from Crete, New Zealanders found themselves fighting German and Italian forces under the command of General Erwin Rommel in the North African desert. After the Axis forces had collapsed in 1943, the New Zealanders made their way back to base while on the other side of the world, their country's mainland was under the threat of another Axis power – Japan. With the British Government's admission that they would be unable to protect New Zealand from an invading Japanese force, New Zealand sent her first ambassador to Washington and dispatched troops in the Pacific assisting American assaults of islands held by the Japanese (cf. KING 2003: 398-402). Meanwhile, the New Zealand Division in Europe was allowed to take part in the Italian campaign following the collapse of Rommel's army. In May 1945, while the New Zealanders were going for Tito's men, Germany surrendered. World War II was New Zealand's last "common denominator, the last intense experience that tens of thousands of people would share, and whose rationale was accepted by the country as a whole" (KING 2003: 407-8). Casualties accounted for more than 11.500 souls, all in all the highest death toll rate per head of population in the Commonwealth (cf. KING 2003: 406). With the burgeoning anti-Semitism many European intellectuals were driven to New Zealand, among them German scholar Karl Wolskehl and Austrian philosopher Karl Popper (cf. KING 2003: 415). Following the example of Frank Sargeson, the first full-time New Zealand writer to remain in New Zealand, writers and artist started to stay in New Zealand, whereas in the



decades prior, scholars and scientists had fled the islands for other mostly European resort.

In 1947, the New Zealand government ratified the Statute of Westminster, making New Zealand a fully independent member of the British Commonwealth (cf. KING 2003: 420). During the 1950s and 60s, the “baby boom” generation aggrandised the New Zealand population, its schools and teachers. City suburbs popped up and the radio entertained the population with radio drama at home. Sir Edmund Hillary climbed Mount Everest with his Sherpa Tenzing Norgay – “knocked the bastard off” – and Queen Elizabeth II was the first British monarch to visit New Zealand (cf. King 2003: 412). *Landfall*, a quarterly literary journal was established and edited by Charles Brasch and would remain the single outlet for New Zealand literary voices (cf. KING 2003: 419). A sales boom for New Zealand wool secured that agriculture remained the country’s dominant industry, whose negative effects on countryside and land led to the first national conservation campaign (cf. KING 2003: 431, 438). Environment-conscious New Zealand was well on its way to ban nuclear weapons from the South Pacific, when in 1985 the French secret service (DGSE) sank Greenpeace’s *Rainbow Warrior* on its way to French Polynesia to protest against nuclear testing. The French Government paid compensation to New Zealand (cf. King 2003: 443).

The war in Vietnam did two things: it alienated New Zealand further from Great Britain, and it divided the country into the two sections of anti-communist hardliners and anti-war activists (cf. King 2003: 450-2). Via Vietnam, the 60s/70s revolution was triggered: oral contraceptive, marihuana, abolition of the six o’clock closing of bars and pubs, Robert Muldoon overseeing the introduction of the decimal currency, the immediacy of the world seen through the medium of television, regular jet services between New Zealand and the rest of the world, the subsequent claim for the right of the big OE (overseas experience), liberalised book censorship (cf. King 2003: 452-55). The big names of New Zealand literature mush-

room: Owen Marshall, Greg McGee, Vincent O’Sullivan, Fiona Kidman, Ian Wedde, Bill Manhire, Maurice Gee, C.K. Stead, Janet Frame, Kevin Ireland. Women’s liberation and consciousness-raising groupings developed out of American civil rights and anti-war movements, for example NOW (National Organisation for Women) (cf. KING 2003: 457-9). New Zealand started to embrace its bicultural constitution, with Māori activists and immigrants from the Islands boosting their cultural protocols (cf. King 2003: 465). The ongoing urbanisation of New Zealand and the intensified participation of Māori in everyday-life in interaction with Pākehā forced Māori to rethink and -define aspects of their Māoriness and their tribal organisation. Detribalised Māori families with no structure to hold on to fell into dysfunction and by the 1970s, Māori as a language was nearly extinct. Māori in the cities were expected to learn English, the Pākehā way of life, to be able to participate. (cf. KING 2003: 470-80) Māori protest campaigns forced Labour to pick up Māori issues to keep its seats. While issues such as marae renovations and Māori language in schools were discussed publicly, growing interest in Māori culture led to an increase in works by Māori authors such as Hone Tuwhare, Witi Ihimaera, Patricia Grace, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Keri Hulme, who won the Booker Prize in London in 1985. By the late 1970s growing public attention had led to a “Māori renaissance” (cf. KING 2003: 484).

The 1980s brought the confirmation of new directions for the country: Never again would a New Zealand national rugby team play against South Africa in the era of apartheid. Muldoon, by then prime minister and minister of finance, and his attempt to make New Zealand self-sufficient in energy – the so-called “Think Big” strategy – failed. Still, the will to become more independent grew and was also consolidated by the British and US-American declining to condemn the French Secret Service for the bombing of the Greenpeace *Rainbow Warrior*. New Zealand fell away from the defence connection with the USA and became more committed in United Nations peacekeeping operations. The ethnic mix of New Zealand’s population changed with an increase in Asian and Pacific Island immigration, although

views of biculturalism are prevailing through the tradition of the Treaty and the strong wish of the Pākehā to separate from the common “immigrant” (cf. KING 2003: 486-96, 513-4). There is a growing conviction among the Pākehā population that their culture has become “a second indigenous culture” (KING 2003: 514). The mutual cultural exchange that started in 1769 bears no sign of end.

Recent history of the terrible earthquake in Christchurch keeps reminding New Zealand of her shaky position astride tectonic plates. It claimed 159 lives, thus surpassing the quake of 1931, which was cited the worst human disaster in the country’s history (cf. KING 2003: 352) until the earth shook in 2011. The suggestions, however, to replace the silver fern on the All Blacks’ uniform with a red fern to commemorate the affected people of Canterbury with their affiliated colour, was declined by the team’s captain Richie McCaw: “I don’t think that’s a goer at all. [...] The silver fern has a lot of history. [...] We have to be careful not to mess with traditions too much. Winning the World Cup would be enough of a tribute to them” (NZ Herald March 25, 2011; online). Although everybody’s thoughts were with the Christchurch population in their moment of plight the captain of the All Blacks did not dare touch the silver fern – sporting and therefore national icon of New Zealand.

In which way, now, are New Zealand gender identities results of historical developments? There have been several historical studies on gender and gender relations in New Zealand, such as Helen Simpson’s seminal 1940 *The Women of New Zealand* and the much later studies of Barbara Brookes et al. in 2004 on gender in southern Dunedin during the turn of the century, but perhaps most prominently and successfully Jock Phillips in 1987, the first concise historical account of masculinities in New Zealand. Phillips, although hugely aware and reflexive of gender dynamics in New Zealand, does not succeed in conniving at essentialist myths and discourses leaving statements such as “in the colonies a man could feel a man once more” (PHILLIPS 1987: 5) and “faced with the extreme nature of his environment,

the colonial male held intellectual skills and book-learning in low regard" (PHILLIPS 1987: 24) remain unfortunately unreflected. Still, Phillips' work must not be underestimated, for it provides the knowing reader with a plethora of material on New Zealand males in the course of time. In 1999, *The Gendered Kiwi* productively questioned old-established beliefs and Jock Phillips' account in the shape of Charlotte Macdonald's contribution "Too Many Men and Too Few Women: Gender's 'Fatal Impact' in Nineteenth-Century Colonies". Macdonald investigates the given fact that New Zealand's gendered society is portrayed popularly as the "natural" effect of population gender asymmetry" (MACDONALD 1999: 20); popularly because in contrast to New Zealand Tasman neighbour Australia recorded a much greater surfeit of males (cf. MACDONALD 1999: 28). Macdonald identifies the 1860s gold rush as the "single most masculinising factor in settler history" (MACDONALD 1999: 24) where the sex disparities were by far the highest. Macdonald's endeavour of a comparison of the settlement procedure in New Zealand with Australia and the United States leads her to subsume: "Nineteenth-century immigrant societies tended to be dominated by men." However, "the Australasian and the western North American [...] were places where strong temperance movements led by women flourished, and where parallel campaigns for women's political rights won early success." (MACDONALD 1999: 31, 32) She ends her remarks with a warning and impetus:

Gender analysis is not primarily a counting exercise. [...] [H]istorians of women and femininity must resist the temptation to fall back on arguments based on numerical scarcity. The unbalanced sex ration cannot be overlooked in understanding the nature of gender in New Zealand history, but is must be considered with care and cannot be assumed to have led, inevitably, to a single set of social effects or manifestation. The assumption that populations in which gender is in balance are normal and/or optimal needs to be more fully critiqued. (MACDONALD 1999: 32-3)

Raewyn Connell's seminal notion on the history of masculinity: "Empire was a gendered enterprise from the start" (CONNELL 1995: 187), was used as a hook by Bev James and Kay Saville-Smith when they – infinitely more insightful than Phil-

lips and in response to Macdonald's just demurs – challenged New Zealand's gendered culture for the first time in 1989 in their seminal critique *Gender, Culture, and Power*. They identify the source and reasons for New Zealand's gendered society aloof popularised numeric facts and analyse the dysfunctions and costly manifestations of the results of historical developments. Perhaps not surprising, they trace the beginnings of New Zealand's modern gender identity formation back to the early days of colonisation:

The notion of masculinity and femininity embedded in New Zealand's gendered culture were brought to Aotearoa by British migrants. The gendered culture itself, however, was not an import [...] [but] derived from a complex interaction between indigenous and colonial structures which met during the early period of colonization. (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 16)

The fact that they do not provide an image of gender from pre-European times conveys two points: the hegemony of the colonising power and the subsequent predominance and prevalence of its gender protocols, and the author's conviction of the feigned insignificance of Māori gender protocol to the formation of New Zealand gender identities today. The truth lies perhaps somewhere in the middle. Whatever gender-relations looked like in pre-European Aotearoa, the impact of colonial gender protocol was enormous in such that it succeeded in replacing, diminishing or at least rendering invisible the pre-existing Māori model. From the 1980s on, however, Māori would start to retrace gender ideas of their very own cultural heritage and would re-accommodate them into modern Māori society – for example the interesting realisation of takatāpui identity which will be adequately discussed. Until the late twentieth century though, the hegemonic New Zealand gender protocol would be determined by the colonising Pākehā power. In 1999 Charlotte Macdonald stated that “the way in which gender shaped interactions between Maori and Pakeha remains relatively under-investigated and deserves further analysis” (MACDONALD 1999: 22) and underlined thus what is still the case in this very moment.

James and Saville-Smith explain the linkage of a gendered culture to the development and maintenance of a functioning state, and subsequently nation. They do not undertake the step to distinguish between the state as a functioning political institution and nation as an imagined community and ideological abstractum, yet. Be that as it may, the state as a concrete executive institution reveals similar (historical) motivations to create and then uphold a fiercely gendered society and even succeeds in rendering the created genderedness of living natural and immutable.

According to James and Saville-Smith it all started with “social disorder” characteristic of European society that would then become New Zealand’s settler society, the Pākehā. The resolution of the said disorder was the state’s “promotion of strict sexual division of labour, the development of concepts of masculinity and femininity [...], and the association of masculine and feminine attributes with the ‘national interest’” (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 32). Raewyn Connell explained that “colonial conquest itself was mainly carried out by segregated groups of men – soldiers, sailors, traders, administrators, and a good many who were all these by turn” (CONNELL 1998: 12). She also emphasises the precarious control of the state over the frontier which takes an important role in New Zealand state control and the state’s interest to create and maintain a certain gender order. James and Saville-Smith identify the state’s main legitimacy resting on the “maintenance of public order” (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 32), with the state at the same time revealing “strong conservative tendencies” and acting “to maintain the social and economic power of dominant élite groups” (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 101). To ensure this maintenance of (conservative) public order, the state as political as well as cultural institution had to promote a certain construction of femininity: the “Cult of Domesticity” (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 32). In this construction, the lives of women were arranged “as dependent and privatized [and] opposed to a masculinity which situate[d] men as actors in the public sphere where they [were] providers for, and protectors of, women” (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 32). The invention of the Cult of Domesticity would allow for three things respectively at one with the state’s

interest: it would attract men who were willing to play the role of the provider, substantiating thus the will of the individual to care for their family, and subsequently enabling a proper controlling and educating of the state's children (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 32-3). The Cult and its connection with the women's franchise can also not be seen as a threat to itself as the franchise was mainly intended to bestow female "alleged moral superiority and conservatism [upon a] corrupt world of male politics" (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 33) as "the presence of women was in itself a civilising factor" (PHILLIPS 1987: 51). Feminists saw the enfranchisement as a basis for social reform, whereas powerful men saw themselves consolidated in their conservatism. It further stimulated the "feminization" (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 34) of occupations such as teaching, nursing and caring professions, where women remained un-tangents to male competitors (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 34). Alongside the homogenised Cult of Domesticity, two concepts of masculinity existed: the Family Man and the Man Alone (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 36).

The Man Alone from the very early days of colonisation refers to the common experience of a life without a wife, and the construction rests on two exclusively male pillars: male mateship and male labour. Men working in manual work, sometimes mobile labour, worked in co-operative and isolated conditions allowing for male mateship only, in both work and leisure. Phillips calls this "a relationship of circumstance" (PHILLIPS 1987: 27). The self-sufficiency of early Men Alone is still reflected in the modern imaginations of No.8-Wire guys, Can-Do attitudes and DIY-activities of New Zealand men (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 36-40). The sentiments of the Man Alone was most successfully epitomised in John Mulgan's novel *Man Alone*, first published in 1939, and was pushed to the extreme and the hilarious in 1960 in Barry Crump's *A Good Keen Man*.

By trends associated with a threat to authorities – the power of the propertied – the Man Alone saw his antidote rising in the form of the Cult of Domesticity, which

brought along two changes: Firstly, although manual labour was still associated with “being a man”, it saw a shift from the working sphere into the domestic sphere and labour in the household. Secondly, because the significance of work now lay in the affinity to men of being family providers, the creation and maintenance of male mateship saw a shift to the realms of leisure only. Pubs and especially sports were the sites of male mateship (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 40-1). “Sports, particularly rugby, not only provided an outlet for the aggressive tendencies celebrated as a male virtue, but also a context in which intimate contact could be maintained between men” (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 41). Phillips explains the popularity of rugby football because it offered the one place where men could receive their desired physical contact without running the risk of alleged homosexuality. As a result, the view was engrained that rugby was an alternative to sex (cf. PHILLIPS 1987: 93; 101): Mateship before mating. Nowadays, Rugby still allows for a combination of the Family Man and the Man Alone since women and the family are banned to the sidelines as spectators and cheerleaders. From the beginning, rugby football and pub crawling – subsequent heavy drinking – both grew out of a ritualised male settler community. The pub as ambiguous arena of male mateship associated alcohol with disorderly male behaviour and violence, consolidating the fissure between the public and the private spheres: Liqueur was served where women were offered as prostitutes, reasserting the pub as a mainly male arena, which the introduction of the 6 o’clock closing from 1920 until 1967 could only reassure. (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 42) Pubs as “artificially segregated male community” catered for a “central test of male identity” (PHILLIPS 1987: 78).

Since the pioneering Man Alone and the state’s invention of the Family Man, James and Saville-Smith hold, little has changed in the genderedness of New Zealand’s society and everyday life: The amalgamation of the Family Man with the Man Alone is still apparent; the male way of life is still associated with labour – mateship rather than mating being the main dynamic informant of masculinity; male mateship still celebrates the ritualised affirmations of masculinity through sexual



and/or physical power over others – alcohol and rugby being the arenas to celebrate the former; the subsequent deployment of male culture as national identity and the resulting dependency of femininity to all the above are still destined to support the New Zealand (male) way of life (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 48-54).

James and Saville-Smith go on to denounce the costs of such a highly gendered culture: alcohol abuse, violence, female victimisation, and the victimisation of the subaltern (cf. 1989: 63-74). Interestingly, they identify the popular explanation for the genderedness of New Zealand which renders invisible the state's (or state-nation's?) political interest in maintaining such a strict gender order:

The gendered culture maintains sex inequalities by its emphasis on difference rather than on exclusion. [...] the gendered culture associates different qualities and characteristics with each sex. Difference, then, is considered to be deeply and immutably rooted in biology. [Even] inequalities between men [...] are reduced to differences in natural ability. (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 88-9)

James and Saville-Smith pin down the one ideology that magically upholds the hegemony of masculinity over femininity and the hegemony of certain, physically more able masculinities over other, subaltern masculinities: plain biology; physicality above all; the male able body on top of the food-chain. It is not difficult to agree on the facility a naturalisation of gender inequalities along biological lines functions and is accepted. Even Jock Phillips, apt observer and fierce critic of New Zealand's gender construction, falls into the biological trap: He justifies strict sex-related work-division with the women's "child-rearing function" (PHILLIPS 1987: 5) at the same time claiming that the intellectual framework for his research were feminist studies. Yet again, biological sex division is a natural and immutable arrangement – as if feminism had never happened.

Leading back to the current political decision-taking for the up-coming rugby world cup – the building of special “female spaces” in stadiums and the deploying of low-fare taxis for the safe return home – the reaffirmation of biological sex division is most apparent and critique has to be uttered most vehemently. Change will not come about so soon, unless state, nation and other institutions intervene, get to the core of New Zealand’s gendered society and ‘grab it by its balls’, so to speak. The state as “promoter of the ‘public good’” (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 102) has to remember its role. James and Saville-Smith would like to see institutions promoting “subordinate masculinities which are not built on male dominance over women [...] and male exclusivity” (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 94). The belief that gender asymmetry is “functional and socially useful [...] to the future of the nation” (MONTGOMERIE in DALEY & MONTGOMERIE 1999: 166) has to be declared null and void.

An analysis of the performance of New Zealand masculinities in New Zealand’s literature is a means to make visible the plethora of masculinities within New Zealand gender dynamics that have found expression in short fiction – against all biological, state-sponsored and nationally-celebrated odds – and opens a window to an imagination of New Zealand that is indeed scientifically enthralling and personally lucrative to have a closer look at.

## **THE NEW ZEALAND SHORT STORY – PRIMARY SOURCES**

The world of print does not divide quite so readily into the made-up and the what-really-happened. (CALDER 1993: 9)

In New Zealand, the genre of the short story has a long tradition of popularity with both producers and consumers. The first two great New Zealand writers, Katherine Mansfield and Frank Sargeson, produced a mentionable corpus of short stories. Mansfield although through expatriation claimed by European literary history is

now embraced by both New Zealand literary scholarship and readership. Frank Sargeson is an ever so important writer because he remained in New Zealand and became the first author to be awarded the attribute of being the *national* writer of his country and his time.

The popularity of the genre of short fiction in New Zealand has occupied literary scholarship for decades and has been justified mostly in conjunction with the brevity of the genre and its connection with everyday life in the (post)colony: a short story comprises limited space and requires only a limited time span to write (and read) and therefore “the writer of a short story makes a smaller investment of his time and work with a better chance of getting some return for it” (JOSEPH 1961: 2). Also, as Owen Marshall states in my interview with him (March 11, 2009), one must not forget that the first New Zealand colonial writers were only part time writers and often found it easier and quicker to produce and publish short stories. As Lawrence Jones condenses: “The writing conditions – you couldn’t be a full time writer. The publishing conditions – you couldn’t be published within the country [as a novelist]. But short stories could be and people actually read them” (Interview March 20, 2009). The length and density of a novel proved to be a tiring effort to achieve and could only be published overseas, whereas short stories found eager local readership through magazine and periodical publications.

Two major implications are to be observed in the discourse of New Zealand short story production: Firstly, the short story was the more feasible, less time consuming genre. Secondly and more interestingly, the short story as such was not regarded as fiction by the readership:

[T]he best early writing in this country consisted of narratives of fact rather than fiction. So it was natural in our case that the early short story was related to memoir or article rather than to the novel. [...] [The early short stories] are reporting, not fiction. (JOSEPH 1956: 4)

The author was assumed and expected by the readership to produce “narratives of fact” at a specific time. Critic Robert Chapman explained in 1953 that a New Zealand writer retained his place by

working at other jobs and accepting the fact that writing here must be virtually unpaid, be for a small audience, and carry few perquisites of recognition and prestige. [...] [T]he writer here must as a first step achieve the illusion of realism; must detect and present what would be taken for a photograph of reality by an audience which has neither an album nor so much as a snap. But it is, after all, a composed engraving which must pass for a photograph of reality. (CHAPMAN 1953: 31)

Further, Lawrence Jones says:

They [the readership] would feel [the short story] as being a bit different from what literature was. Literature was something that came from England and Europe. [...] The first journal in which the writers of the 30s appeared was primarily a left-wing political social commentary journal. It was taken for granted short stories were realistic and that they were pictures of this society. They didn't have literary pretension. (Interview March 2009)

New Zealand author- and readership have supported, even demanded, the mimetic link between literature and the extra-literary world with its discourses. Owen Marshall, one of New Zealand's most productive writers, articulates that

[a]rt comes out of an individual consciousness which in turn is affected by background and experiences and conventions. What comes out as art is often unconsciously if not consciously reflecting the lifestyle and the cultural hour. (Interview March 2009)

Literature is a medium willingly conceptualising images and inventions in the extra-literary world which are then rendered stereotypes and in the course reinforced, rewritten and reproduced. One has to acknowledge the imagination and the will of both New Zealand authorship and consumer for the short story to be a manifestation of cultural discourse. The New Zealand short story is, spoken in

Benedict Anderson's wordings, a cultural product of nationalism, and, specifically, a means to quest for, invent and create national identity.

An overview of the timeline of New Zealand's short story production is essential for the country's literary history. Lydia Wevers, director of the Stout Research Centre in Wellington, presents a concise outline of the New Zealand short story in the *Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English* (1991: 203-268). Wevers begins her account with a praise of the ability of the short story as a genre to give colonials and postcolonials the chance to "work themselves out" and address an "explicitly local readership", especially prior to the 1950s when novel writers still had to publish in Britain (cf. WEVERS 1991: 203). She goes so far as to deem that "the short story is where New Zealanders have placed themselves; away from Europe but within European hegemonic cultural discourse" (WEVERS 1991: 203). She explains the genre's popularity through its diminutive length and accompanying metaphor for unfinished-ness:

[I]ts very brevity speaks for the absence of other, larger certainties, encoding the problematic context of colonial and post-colonial literatures. If breaking away from Great Britain is articulated in a hunger [...] for words that give us a "home in thought", the characteristic fictional form of these words in New Zealand for a long time was the short story, perhaps because the problematic questions of separation, race, culture, and identity which constrain and shape an emerging national literature can be more comfortably articulated in a genre which does not imply resolution. (WEVERS 1991: 203)

Wevers thus deputises the short story as the ultimate (post)colonial genre able to epitomise (post)colonial anxiety, dislocation and identity processes.

The birth of New Zealand literature is induced by colonial short fictions in the late nineteenth century. The stories are "tales and yarns which represent experience as orally authenticated and basically documentary even if realism is heightened or

exaggerated for comic or dramatic effect” (WEVERS 1991: 205). To separate himself from the country of origin, the colonial story tells of work and characters shaped by their work in a specific physical environment in a documentary way. Colonial fictitious characters look and talk different from their originating culture. Māori are incorporated into the stories as stereotypes, childlike caricatures and supernatural Other (cf. WEVERS 1991: 207-8). Edith Lyttleton, admirer of Kipling and Stevenson, wrote novels and short romances and published under the pseudonym G.B. Lancaster before she left New Zealand for good. Most of her fiction was written “as if by a man” (WEVERS 1991: 212). Writing from a male point of view, Lancaster tells of men engaging in masculine actions disturbed by female presence in their male cohabitation. She praises the male values of the colonial stereotype: toughness, mateship and work and establishes the prototype of the tough colonial male (cf. WEVERS 1991: 212-3). Perhaps unconsciously, Edith Lyttleton, writing under a male pseudonym, contributes to and participates in the process of national identity formation through myth writing. Portraying in writing thus becomes actively contributing to myth making and identity developing.

By the early twentieth century, the “colonial” had been narrativised and historicised through “a series of distinctions between past and present, town and country, Māori and Pākehā, the uncivilized and the civilized” (WEVERS 1991: 214). Into this already established nostalgia rushed forth a young woman eventually called Katherine Mansfield, born by the name of Kathleen Beauchamp. Most of Mansfield’s attractiveness lies in her wilful exile from New Zealand, a fact that made her a European writer more than a New Zealand colonial one, although she was later claimed as cultural icon in the country of her birth. She published a bulk of short fictions and sketches in local publications before she left New Zealand for good in 1908 under the male pseudonym Julian Mark. As with G.B. Lancaster, Mansfield felt she could only be taken seriously when she wrote as if she were male, “where to write as a woman would have restricted her to certain subjects” (WEVERS 1991: 216). Mansfield considered herself a displaced person, always on the move, and is

often mentioned in the same breath as Virginia Woolf. Although the motif of transit recurs in her fictions and render her writing travel literature in the broadest sense, nearly half of her stories take place in New Zealand and succeeded in casting the undiscovered colony into the gaze of the old world (cf. WEVERS 1991: 219). Mansfield died of tuberculosis in 1923 at the young age of 35 and literary scholars and subsequent writers of New Zealand have wondered what she might have given to New Zealand readers had she had more time. In 2008, Marco Sonzogni, academic at the University of Wellington, edited *Second Violins*, a collection of unfinished stories by Katherine Mansfield, resumed by the imagination of present New Zealand authors. The breadth of this publication sings of New Zealand authors' admiration for Mansfield.

The year 1930 saw the first collection of New Zealand short stories in which the editor O.N. Gillespie apologised for the lack of any nationally distinct features resulting from New Zealand's alleged homogenous, Anglo-Saxon population (cf. as quoted in WEVERS 1991: 222). Allen Curnow also deemed that there was something "frighteningly monolithic" (CURNOW 1960: 64) about New Zealand culture in his introduction to *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* in 1960.

In was a New Zealand on the search for itself that Frank Sargeson was born into: "[W]ith the advent of Frank Sargeson in the 1930s, feminist political romance gave way to masculinist oral narrative as the dominant short fiction of New Zealand literature" (WEVERS 1991: 224). Sargeson's accounts on Depression life hit the current nerve of society, and his portrayal of vernacular speech worked as cogent frame of reality to a broad readership. In his fiction, he is preoccupied with identity, be it gender, national, social or cultural identity from a male point of view.

With Sargeson, the focus of the short story shifted to the idiom of men. His characterization of New Zealand as puritanical, narrow-minded, and provincial society, torn by conflict between the sexes, framed by the

point of view of a young man or a boy, and expressed in an orally impoverished, repetitive, and largely non-figurative idiom, became the realist ground on which the short story flourished. (WEVERS 1991: 230)

Sargeson is thus the creator of the headstone of masculinist traditions in New Zealand literary production. Subsequently, as literature is a cultural product of nationalism, Sargeson also offered the medium through which national identity could be actively constituted. Wevers claims: "More than any other writer, the work of Frank Sargeson signifies New Zealandness in our literature. Even though his stories can hardly be said still to reflect a familiar society, his fiction, like Henry Lawson's of Australia, offers a reading of New Zealand" (WEVERS 1991: 222). Among his literary successors are A.P. Gaskell, Dan Davin, James Courage and O.E. Middleton who all rely on the realist New Zealand that Sargeson had invented; and he proved influential to women writers such as Helen Shaw and Janet Frame (cf. WEVERS 1991: 230). Unfortunately, only few writers possessed Sargeson's narrative talent and allowed for subtleties to become stereotypical and iconic caricatures, as for instance in the stories of Barry Crump and his 'Good Keen Men'. New Zealand short fiction remained within the realist boundaries of Sargeson's invention for more than twenty years (cf. WEVERS 1991: 235).

From the 1960s onward, the New Zealand literary landscape was predominated by two strands: the Writing as Other/Other Writing and the New Zealand "free" story. Whereas the Writing as Other/Other Writing is an umbrella term for the writings by Māori, women and migrant writers, the "free" story is a mere succession of Sargeson's realist masculine short fiction (cf. WEVERS 1991: 243, 251).

In the Other Writing, the short story is used to "explore New Zealand as if from the outside, constructing narratives about people distinguished by their cultural and racial difference" (WEVERS 1991: 243). The 1950s saw first publications of Māori



stories in English by J.C. Sturm in periodicals, telling of a New Zealand in which a Māori woman struggles in Sargesonian realist manner:

Sturm's stories, along with those of her successors, Patricia Grace, Witi Ihimaera, Keri Hulme and others, engage directly with cultural oppositions as do those of immigrant writers. Like [Yvonne] du Fresne, Māori writers speak in a different language, but by giving voice to the silent other, the other who most explicitly and uncomfortably challenges cultural hegemony and given social structures, Māori writers rewrite New Zealand in English, their fictions breaking out of and therefore signifying their silence. (WEVERS 1991: 245)

Witi Ihimaera was the first Māori writer to publish a collection of short stories called *Pounamu*, *Pounamu* in 1972. The stories in this collection are all placed in rural settings and tell of cultural and racial differences and disputes that can be resolved by human essentials only: love and basic decency (cf. WEVERS 1991: 246). Wevers identifies that although Māori writers seldom write about gender conflicts, Māori writing implies "the masculinity of Pākehā culture" (WEVERS 1991: 251). The identification of the cultures thus runs along gendered lines. Also, Māori literature stresses the importance of the past and its orality: "the past is where identity lies" and language functions "as a medium for voice rather than [...] abstract or linguistic play" (WEVERS 1991: 251).

The "free" story, a term derived by Clare Hanson, who set the "free" story interested in concrete and particular subjects in opposition to symbolist short fiction, is a succession of Sargeson's social realist snaps (cf. WEVERS 1991: 251). New Zealand "free" stories continue the transmission of certain imaginations of the national psyche; they tell of individuals suggestive of larger social pressures in culturally significant locations usually written from a male point of view. Wevers names Maurice Shadbolt, Maurice Gee, Vincent O'Sullivan and Owen Marshall as exponents of the genre. Gee's, O'Sullivan's and Marshall's stories "share the cultural locations that produce (male) New Zealand – racing, rugby, and beer" (WEVERS 1991: 253). Wevers opines that since Sargeson established New Zealand voice, the New

Zealand “free” story has served “not so much as a spoken idiom signifying a culture, but as the idiom of a culture identifying itself” (WEVERS 1991: 253). New Zealandness has begun to reproduce itself through the medium of the “free” story. If that be the case, it is important that

[t]he “free” story in New Zealand fiction, especially as it is written by Pākehā men, is deeply preoccupied with gender relationships, and in particular, with sexual relationships. Exploring character as a signifier of a larger cultural context, the stories of male writers focus on male locations which can only achieve definition by reference to gender-based difference. As a result, cultural identity is represented as sexual identity, difference as gender difference, and signs of anxiety and unease express themselves in bad marriages, unforgiving partners, failed or inadequate sexual performance, and conflicting emotional claims. (WEVERS 1991: 256)

Thus, it appears that the “free” story by male authors subconsciously, if not consciously, supports the linkages between cultural, national identity and gender identity – the expression of cultural identity runs along gendered lines, the characters expression of gender identity manifests as cultural and national belonging. The New Zealand short story of the twentieth century is a means to reproduce and thus naturalise gender relations on the islands.

By the 1980s, the “free” or realist-humanist story was challenged in the form of the (international) post-modern story. The focus of the postmodern story is on the experience of language, the play with historical events or people, and the exploitation of the possibilities offered by discontinuities of space, time and place, disrupting the conventions connecting reader and text. The New Zealand postmodern story has a tendency to create “factions” – real events of people in fictional contexts, exploiting a culturally specific environment (cf. WEVERS 1991: 257, 259-60). Although the postmodern story succeeded in hustling the “free” story into obsolescence, it did not get rid of its masculinity:

[T]he narrators of post-modern fiction are identified with their masculinity. Their desire is predominantly heterosexual and their identification of the languages and codes of power, as well as their social relations and fictional contexts, are defined by their sexuality. Post-modernism, in its origins, was a masculine act, and gender is a continuing preoccupation, as it had been with writers of the “free” story. If race is not a form of difference which it explores, gender is. (WEVERS 1991: 260-1)

Indeed and after all, the masculine tradition prevails and still predominates the literary production in New Zealand. Cultural identification still runs along gendered lines. The mode has changed; the message stays the same. The postmodern literary output in New Zealand remains in the hands of Pākehā male writers. Wevers names Michael Gifkins, John Cranna and Bill Manhire as representatives of the postmodern story.

The 1980s also saw the rise in interest in the writings of women and the publication of anthologies dedicated to women authors. Why women occupied themselves with the penning of short stories to the same extent as men did, supports perhaps the iconic culturality of the genre. Equally, social realism with a close domestic focus seemed to be the literary home of women writers. Authors like Fiona Kidman, Patricia Grace, Yvonne du Fresne and Shonagh Koea investigate the female condition and emotions rather than the connection of the individual and society (cf. WEVERS 1991: 263-4). Perhaps as a reflection of the Cult of Domesticity, settings in short stories by women are often interior, enclosed, domestic environments and move only seldom into larger terrain. Domestic spaces also serve as metaphors for female sexuality. Men are commonplaces of inability of articulate emotions; and the Man Alone has no equivalent in women’s stories (cf. WEVERS 1991: 264).

As we know from historical developments, second wave feminism gave way to the Māori cultural renaissance, which strongly affected the literary landscape of New Zealand. From the 1960s and 1970s on, the Other in the form of women, Māori

men and women, but also Pacific Islanders, gay and lesbian writers (the postcolonial Subaltern) have begun to reach out and enter the New Zealand literary realm to push further the unsettling features in New Zealand fiction. The rise of the Subaltern allows for holistically new imaginations of New Zealandness, national identities and their linkages to gender, class and race. Old boundaries are breached, bent, drawn and redrawn, performed and reenacted. An interesting development also visible in Australia is the frequent occurrence of the historical short story and novel. The past is rewritten – is in dire need to be rewritten – and the Subaltern obey happily. Peter Wells is queering New Zealand's bellicose past in his short story "Little Joker Sings"; and "[h]istory is being rewritten from a feminist point of view" (MARSHALL: Interview March 2009) by historical novelists Jenny Pattrick, Rose Tremain and Deborah Challinor. In short film making, Taika Waititi allows the audience in *Tama Tū* to catch a moment of a group of young Māori Battalion soldiers waiting and killing time until they head back out into World War II. Unsettling and reimagining the past has indeed been a popular avocation for New Zealand authors and film makers.

The overview of New Zealand short fiction could be resumed thus: The years following 1990 have seen a plethora of short story anthologies: travel stories (Ed. Michael Gifkins 1993; Ed. Tina Shaw 1998), collections of writers in writing workshops and classes (Ed. Maryan Moss 1996), gay writing (Ed. Peter Wells 1996), writings on nature and landscape (Ed. Philip Temple 1998; Ed. David Eggleton 1999), stories on racing (Ed. Brian Phillips 2000), Pacific writing (Niu Voices I 2006), Māori writing (Huia Short Story collections from 1995, now in its eighth run), Pacific erotic writing (Ed. Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm 2003), writing on fishing (Ed. Owen Marshall 2001), writing on cats (Ed. Peter Wells 2005), stories by immigrants and international writers (Ed. T.M. Schaefer 2006), stories selected by their authors (Ed. Owen Marshall 2001), and imaginations of Antarctica (Ed. Bill Manhire 2004). They all exist additionally to the numerous *New Short Fiction, Essential*

and *Best Of* collections and form an incredible corpus of short literature produced by the New Zealand population.

Alex Calder says “[t]he world of print does not divide quite so readily into the made-up and the what-really-happened” (1993: 9) when he introduces his collection *The Writing of New Zealand. Inventions and Identities*, a wonderful compilation of fictional and non-fictional (if one even bothers to starkly set the two apart) texts from the times of the Western ‘discovery’ of New Zealand in the eighteenth century until the late twentieth century. Although he is aware that the authors might dispute his decision not to distinguish between true and imagined, story and history, Calder clearly points to the thin line between the active and the passive and the interdependability of the creation of discourses: the writing of the authors, the literature by New Zealanders, which at the same time writes and creates New Zealand – New Zealand comes into being through language and the cultural produce of the written word. The invented story transforms into history, and forms the myth and narration upon which an imagined communality can exist. Literature imagines and may resuscitate the (sleeping) soul of a nation. As a Māori proverb says: “Ka ngaro te reo, ka ngaro taua, pera i te ngaro o te moa.” “If the language be lost, man will be lost, as dead as the moa.” Language and literature invent man, confirm identity and continually legitimise their inventions. Without language, identity cannot exist for it lacks the crucial medium.

Although the New Zealand novel has gained notable vogue, the short story remains the most popular and most widely read genre. Owen Marshall fittingly denotes New Zealand short stories as a “resilient genre” (2001: 7). It is the New Zealand short story’s perseverance and its popularity that bestows the genre with enormous power; the power to (re)create and naturalise identities and gender relations in accordance with the national interest. The popularity of the short story and the peculiar belief in its “realist” accuracy guarantee the wide spreading of its message, secures its sovereign territory and consolidates its status as cultural

product of nationalism. The New Zealand short story has the power to invent and by reproduction simultaneously self-preserved imaginations of national identities and may even render them stereotypes. The predominance of New Zealand's literary scene by male authors meant a result of New Zealand's gendered culture and a means of maintaining and legitimising it. Because of the above given reasons, to use the New Zealand short story as cultural material for the investigation of the performance of masculinities proves expedient in the light of the genre's history, resilient popularity and genderedness.

There are thirteen short stories that I have chosen as primary texts: five in 'Imitating Tradition', five in 'Breaking Tradition' and three in 'Creating New Traditions'. Whereas the three parts are in no way in chronological order to each other, within them, the stories are organised chronologically. All of the selected stories were published between 1937 and 2007. The beginning is marked by Frank Sargeson and the last story is by Witi Ihimaera. I do not claim that my choice of texts is by all means exhaustive; this is an impossible task considering the vast corpus of New Zealand short stories. I have tried, however, to find writers from each generation subsequent to Frank Sargeson that are illustrative of the multiplicity of New Zealand masculinities. Many authors that I would have liked to include are missing. But as it happens, to keep in line with the scope of a thesis, I had to lower my sights or else, Laconia would have been compromised.

## CONCEPTUAL LENSES

### MASCULINITY STUDIES – STATE OF THE ART AND NEW ZEALAND

The history of masculinity, it should be abundantly clear, is not linear. There is no master line of development to which all else is subordinate, no simple shift from “traditional” to “modern”. Rather we see, in the world created by the European empires, complex structures of gender relations in which dominant, subordinated and marginalized masculinities are in constant interaction, changing the conditions for each others’ existence and transforming themselves as they do. With that banal but necessary historical point in mind, let us turn to the state of play. (R.W. CONNELL 1995: 198-9)

*In the beginning, there was Man. Then there was Woman. Man saw that Woman was different – Man minus something – and created sex. Woman saw that this was wrong and created scientific studies for herself – women’s studies. Scientific studies reached beyond the boundaries of biological sex and created gender. Man came out of his lair, saw that gender was good and sound and created masculinity studies.*

The study of masculinities emerged as a (Western) reaction to feminist studies during the 1970s. Second-wave feminism during the 1960s led to the consolidation of women’s studies in academia a decade later and paved the way for masculinity studies by shifting the object of interest from “woman” to “gender” (cf. ADAMS & SAVRAN 2002: 4). Whereas at first the aim of private profeminist, “consciousness-raising groups” (such as the NOMAS in the United States, and the White Ribbon campaign in Canada) as Victor J. Seidler, founder of the British magazine *Achilles Heel* in 1978, states was to find responses to the challenges of second-wave feminism, masculinity studies soon started to occupy the minds of the academic world and public realm. The private experiences of men coming to grips with feminism finally found its way out into the public by the growing interest of academia and

numerous publications in form of magazines, monographs and collections devoted to the nativity and development of masculinity studies. Emanating from and building on his theory of discourse a decade earlier, Michel Foucault's seminal *The History of Sexuality* (1976) argues that the difference between normative and dissident sexualities is culturally constructed and conditionally historical (cf. FOUCAULT 1976: 11, 69, 103-105). Three important threads would then elaborate from Foucault's notions: Gayatri Spivak would transfer Foucault's "normative and dissident" into postcolonial hegemonic and subaltern and define a new terminology in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" from 1988. Raewyn Connell would jiggle academia with her theories on the construction of hegemonic masculinities recycling Gramsci's term "hegemony" into a useful framework within gender studies (reconsidered and reframed in 2005), and stressing the historicity of masculinities and the genderedness of the Empire; her *Gender and Power* (1987) and *Masculinities* (1995) remain among the most cited works on masculinity studies. Finally, Judith Butler would define significant new grounds in gender studies in her *Gender Trouble* (1990) by arguing the gender is not a fixed category but performatively repeated over and over again.

The late 1980s and early 90s saw the emergence of anthropological and ethnological interest in masculinity studies and thus marked the crucial link between cultural and gender studies. In 1994 Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne put together a comprehensive collection of anthropological and ethnological articles on masculinity within the series "Male Orders" whose editor was Victor J. Seidler. Cornwall and Lindisfarne's *Dislocating Masculinity* introduces methods of anthropology useful for the study of masculinities in culturally diverse locations and raises fundamental questions that constitute the essential challenge to conventional beliefs and understandings of the categorical creation "man":

Is a man only, or always, a 'man'? Are only men 'masculine'? When a man is exhorted to 'be a man', what does this entail? Is a man always the same kind of 'man'? If so, what do men have in common? How and



where are the commonalities constructed and used? And, if a man fails to do 'what a man's gotta do', does he cease to be a man? (CORNWALL & LINDISFARNE 1994: 12)

The questions Cornwall and Lindisfarne raise echo one major concept in gender studies: the construction of gender as an active operation. Gender identity is thus not regarded as a fixed entity that one belongs to but as an act, be it a conscious or subconscious one. Academia soon abandoned the idea of masculinity (as well as femininity) being a commodity that one has or is, for in this case it can be lost, stolen, bought, scientifically measured and would divide the world into the binary pair of have and have-not's. Masculinity, as gender in general, ought to be rather regarded as a concept that is *done*. It is the complex of activities, postures, speech patterns, physicalities, and styles that affirm a gender and are recognisable as such. Just as Judith Butler elegantly formulated four years prior to Cornwall and Lindisfarne: "[G]ender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceede [sic]; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts* [...] [and] the stylization of the body" (BUTLER 1988: 519; Butler's emphasis). She very cleverly turns around the order of assumption of gender construction: It is not gender identity that gives way to specific action; it is rather specific action, the "act", the performance, that creates the gender identity. Thus, Butler coined the idea of performativity of gender identity, which shall be discussed at a later point. By giving identity creation the characteristic of activeness, Butler underlines its repetitiveness and recreativeness: A performance can always be resumed, re-acted, re-performed as it were. By adding the attribute "stylized", Butler paves the way for a cultural studies approach whose objective is to understand within a given culture, within a specific "style", how meaning is created through various practices and structures. It is therefore paramount to assume that masculinities are performed according to a specific set of cultural tools in a specific place at a specific time. In 2002, John Beynon also formulated questions in his *Masculinities and Culture* stressing the cultural studies approach and providing introductory food for thought:

Has masculinity changed throughout history and, if so, how? How is masculinity enacted differently in different settings? [...] Do men everywhere aspire to be 'manly' in the same way? [...] How do people in different cultures construct an image of ideal masculinity (for example, through rituals, trials of skill, sports and endurance)? Does a [...] global archetype of manliness exist across different cultures world-wide? (BEYNON 2002: 4-5)

Beynon does in fact restate what has been said before: Masculinity is a gender identity resulting from specific cultural processes; masculinity is a manifestation of gender discourse in a specific place at a specific time; it is the result of culturally determined performances. Inwardly, performance theory and performativity of gender identity imbibes the Foucauldian concept of discourse: The universe is not in existence *to be* talked but *because* it is talked about it *comes* into being. The activeness of discourse echoes the activeness of gender performativity; within the parameters of a specific cultural setting – what Sara Mills calls “systematicity of ideas” (MILLS 1997: 17) – both discourse and performance actively create a concept, an effect which becomes visible as a manifestation. The imagination of masculinities as manifestations of culturally determined performances of discourses shall be further pursued as a main presupposition. To sum up, deploying Stuart Hall's words:

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are [...] the product of the marking of difference and exclusion. (HALL 1996: 4)

Since masculinities emerge through power play, the concept of hegemony should not be entirely abandoned. It proves most sensible when examining (post)colonial masculinities as the only possible entity to oppose subaltern manifestations to, are, in fact, hegemonic ones – those dominant realisations that determine a certain protocol which will legitimise certain power structures and will privilege specific masculinities over others.

Masculinity studies in New Zealand have scribbled a parallel road in academia; often later editions of works of the 1980s on New Zealand masculinities acknowledge developments and advances in masculinity studies over the past years. The first seminal academic work on masculinities in New Zealand remains in the hands of historian Jock Phillips and his 1987 *A Man's Country?*, revised in a 1996 edition. Phillips amassed an abundance of material in form of photographs, newspaper articles, letters, fictional and non-fictional accounts to establish a historical overview of the image of the Pākehā male. In accordance with the bicultural imagination of New Zealand, he factors out the Māori side of New Zealand history and concentrates primarily on the white settlers' narration. The 1996 revised edition continues the task by extending the histories up until 1995. Jock Phillips occupies the reader's attention with abundant material on hegemonic models of masculinity – gender identities that proved most successful in New Zealand from the 1850s onward, and his work remains one of the most quoted ones on New Zealand masculinity. Another New Zealand historian, who busies himself with the challenges of feminism on the New Zealand male, was the late Michael King, New Zealand's most cherished historian, and editor of the 1991 *Pakeha. The Quest for Identity in New Zealand* and author of the 2003 volume *The Penguin History of New Zealand*. Similarly to Victor J. Seidler's work that focused on "consciousness-raising groups" of struggling men, King edited a collection of confessions of New Zealand males from diverse professions and social backgrounds, trying to grapple with feminism and society's expectations of their performances as males. Although only published one year after Phillips' *A Man's Country?*, King's *One of the Boys?* provides a slightly more wholistic picture of New Zealand males as it incorporates Māori and gay accounts. The collection represents attempts by men to "understand themselves and the influences that condition them" (KING 1988: vii) and is a literary child of its time. Kai Jensen, who at the time of *One of the Boys?* was still writing his account as a student, published *Whole Men* in 1996, the first discussion on masculine traditions in New Zealand literature. He establishes a continuity of literary excitement in masculinity from early writers such as John Mulgan and Frank Sargeson up until Owen Marshall, Maurice Shadbolt and Maurice Gee and how this tradition discour-

aged female writers for many a year forcing them into low profile. Only one year after King's struggling males in *One of the Boys?* the seminal *Gender, Culture, and Power* successfully pillories New Zealand's gendered culture and remains topical far beyond the turn of the century.

Sociology brought several milieu studies of New Zealand masculinities: the construction of masculinity and sport (Fougere 1989, Latimer 1998, Easterbrook 2001, Ferguson 2004), masculinities in pubs and drinking culture (Hodges 1984, Kraack 1996, Hardy 2007), and the construction of masculinity in beer advertisement (Hardy 2007, Law 2008).

The year 1999 saw the publication of two distinguished collections on gender in New Zealand: *The Gendered Kiwi* (DALEY & MONTGOMERIE) takes a historical look at gender relations from colonial times up to the 1970s and is an evidence of how women have been made visible and written into New Zealand history in the past decades. *Masculinities in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (LAW et al.) reveals a decent breadth of academic disciplines contributing to the publication and the overall assumption of masculinities as constructions. Yet again, although giving stress to the bicultural supposition of New Zealand in the title, little is told of the Māori side of narration.

The late 1990s and the years after the turn of the millennium witnessed a germination of scholarly interest in the field of applied sciences, for example the link of masculinity studies and sexual identity to health, for example Worth et al. 2002.

2008 proved to be an exciting year for New Zealand masculinities: Alistair Fox, director of the CRNI – the Centre for Research on National Identity – at the University of Otago in Dunedin, published a monograph on masculinity in New Zealand

fiction: *The Ship of Dreams*. Fox decided on two major sections and two authors in each block: Part one discusses Pākehā writings by Maurice Gee and Stevan Eldred-Griggs, whereas part two looks at Māori authors Witi Ihimaera and Alan Duff. After Kai Jensen's *Whole Men*, Alistair Fox's *Ship of Dreams* is only the second study of New Zealand masculinities in literature, which is rather surprising considering the number of literary output fascinated with the New Zealand male subject and his performances and realisations. Although Fox's work is a treasurable addition to masculinity and literature studies, it presents only limited support to this thesis as it deals with novels in which, quite naturally, New Zealand masculinities are performed at considerably more length, depth and intensity than within the limitations of time and space in short stories. In 2009, Christina Stachurski published yet another study on identity in the New Zealand novel (*Man Alone, The Bone People, Once Were Warriors*), acknowledging the masculinist tradition in them. For the general weal of queer studies, Chris Brickell, a young sociologist, amongst numerous articles on queer studies in New Zealand published his first book *Mates & Lovers* in 2008, which explores the history of New Zealand from a (male) gay perspective and attempts to give credit to histories bound to secrecy. Brickell gathered an abundance of visual and textual material to make queer history come alive and has thus made an important contribution to the queering of New Zealand history, also tellingly not distinguishing between Māori and Pākehā narrations. Chris Brickell also criticised Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and pleaded for reclamation of the concept of performance in order to reintegrate subjective action (cf. BRICKELL 2005).

Brendan Hokowhitu from Te Tumu, School of Māori, Pacific and Indigenous Studies at the University of Otago, dedicates most of his research to Māori masculinity studies and is perhaps the most productive and accomplished scholar in his field and specialises in the connection between Māori masculinity and sport.

Indeed, supportive material to this work's focus is scarce: Apart from selected short stories by Frank Sargeson and Witi Ihimaera that have been discussed at length in form of queer and masculinity readings (cf. JENSEN 1995; FOX 1980), the huge corpus of New Zealand short stories remains seldom touched by academia. This dissertation seeks to remedy the lack of academic scrutiny of the genre of the New Zealand short story with the performances of masculinities in the field of vision.

## **NEW ZEALAND'S A STAGE / AND ALL THE MEN MERELY PLAYERS - PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMATIVITY**

By their performances shall ye know them.  
(Victor Turner as quoted in SCHECHNER & Appel 1990: 1)

Anthropology (Victor Turner), theatre studies (Richard Schechner), and indeed performance studies (Dwight Conquergood) initiated the so-called "performative turn" in the Liberal Arts and Humanities, among them literature studies, and may very boldly be characterised by the shifting of the idea of "act" to "acting", or rather "doing": Performance studies function as method to interpret events as performances or performative acts, even if they are not performances in the traditional or orthodox sense. John L. Austin laid the foundation in linguistics with his seminal work on speech acts, *How to do Things with Words* (1962). Austin emphasised the performative aspect of illocutionary speech acts. The described action is performed by the utterance of the sentence itself, in, for example, phrases such as *I nominate you to*, *I sentence you to* and *I promise you to*. Austin's idea of speech acts as performance was further developed by John R. Searle (*Speech Acts* 1969, *The Philosophy of Language* 1971) when he states that in order to "perform illocutionary speech acts [one] is to engage in a rule-governed form of behaviour" (SEARLE

1971: 40). Such “rule-governed form of behaviour” would later be called a *performance*.

Anthropologist Victor Turner distinguishes between “social” performances and “cultural” performances. The first one means the presentation of the self in social stages; the second refers to aesthetic dramas on actual stages (cf. TURNER 1988: 81). Richard Schechner, the much cited performance studies scholar and collaborator of Turner, suggested almost two decades later that the differentiation happened according to the methodological lens through which we observe a given event. The distinction *an event is performance* and *an event as performance* is Schechner’s (cf. 2006: 38-40) and is most useful for the investigation of cultural phenomena.

In the following section, I will align specific assumptions and preconditions of performance theory that will prove essential to my analysis. In cultural studies, performances have been suggested to be ascertainable through three different assumptions: Mimesis, for one, conceives performance as an “imitation or mirror reflection of the world” (BELL 2008: 12) and thus alludes to the classical assumptions of drama. The result of performance is not reality but a mirror image of it; a lie. Victor Turner and later his wife Edith, two British anthropologists and ethnologists, expedited performance theory by shifting the idea of mere imitation to active creation – poiesis – and arguing that culture is created through performances. Turner’s activation of cultural identity, cultural “performance as making, not faking” (TURNER 1982: 93) bears a groundbreaking brainchild that would later spread out to gender identity and Judith Butler. Turner regards performance as formative of culture not an addition to it; consequently, every little part of a culture has constitutive potential. Turner states in 1988 that we, as members of a culture, are all performers; we are of “*Homo performans*” – “a self-performing animal” (TURNER 1988: 81). Turner paves the path for ethnographer Lorne Dwight Conquergood, who took the third important step based on Turner and upgraded his poiesis to

kinesis; performance as the “movement, motion, fluidity, fluctuation, all those restless energies that transgress boundaries and trouble closure” (CONQUERGOOD 1995: 138). Conquergood grasps Turner’s activeness of performance and its power of creation and applies a certain subjective, political, active directing or intending. A performance could thus alter and be altered, remake and be remade, could break and be broken, adapt and be adapted, always conveying a specific intentionality. The three main assumptions of performance – mimesis, poiesis and kinesis – state the performances imitate, create and break.

Deborah A. Kapchan, another performance studies scholar, formulates insightfully in her 1995 article “Performance”:

Performances are aesthetic practices – patterns of behavior, ways of speaking, manners of bodily comportment – whose repetitions situate actors in time and space, structuring individual and group identities. [...] Indeed, performance genres play an essential (and often essentializing) role in the mediation and creation of social communities, whether organized around bonds of nationalism, ethnicity, class status, or gender. [...] To perform is to carry something into effect – whether it be a story, an identity, an artistic artifact, a historical memory, or an ethnography. The notion of agency is implicit in performance. (KAPCHAN 1995: 479)

Kapchan makes nails with heads in summing up performance as being a discourse and expanding performance theory with the notions identity and community: A performance depends on several factors, such as language and body, time and space – the cultural stage, the audience and the actor. Taking all these factors into account, performance becomes itself a result, a manifestation of cultural discourses, ever imitating, creating and breaking culture (a “community”), identity, and cultural memory.

Whether the performance is successful and in accord with the actor’s intention depends on the performance competence of the actor and according evaluation by



the audience (cf. BELL 2008: 30-32). The performers' knowledge or lore of the cultural protocol and their ability and aptitude to act accordingly is decisive if not imperative for the performance's success and acute or ripple effect. The audience's evaluations of the performance's effectiveness are demarcated by meta-communicative frames: "They [the audience] carry instructions for *how* to interpret messages, events, and actions within that particular frame" (BELL 2008: 36). In this work, the meta-communicative frame is determined, of course, by New Zealand society in its most general compilation and by much smaller cultural stages, such as the rugby field, a fishing boat, a cottage, and by their appointed human repertoire.

Having chiselled the basis for performance studies, the scientific fields of cultural and gender studies were ready to take over: Judith Butler's research marks the link between gender and cultural studies and performance theory when she coined the term "performativity".

Her development of the concept of the performativity of gender in her seminal 1988 article "Performative Acts and Gender Construction" marks a landmark in the field of gender studies. Starting out from the notion that "gender is [...] an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (BUTLER 1988: 519) and from Simone de Beauvoir's claim that gender "is an historical situation" (BUTLER 1988: 520) she develops gender as performative act. Carefully, she does not deny the "natural dimensions of the body" (BUTLER 1988: 520) but sets them apart from the processes determining the body culturally:

[T]he body is understood to be an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities [...]. [T]he acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical context [...] through specific corporeal acts. [...] These possibilities are necessarily constrained by available historical conventions. (BUTLER 1988: 521)

Gender, thus, is performative, is a theatrical act, and renders cultural protocols, a certain style (“historical conventions”) visible. In other words, to be a man one has to “compel the body to conform to an historical idea” (BUTLER 1988: 522) of masculinity.

But, not only the stage within the historical frame and the performativity of gender underline the theatricality but also the human repertoire. In her 2004 *Undoing Gender* Butler says:

If gender is a kind of a doing, in incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not ‘do’ one’s gender alone. One is always ‘doing’ with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary. (2004: 1)

Butler thus incurs the notion of frame of performance studies within which it is acted out and interpreted (“a scene of constraint”) and maintains the principle of actor and (imagined) co-actor or audience (“with or for another”).

Coming back to Butler’s notion of “repetition” of acts that stabilize the created identity, she clarifies that “[t]he act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrives on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actor” (BUTLER 1988: 526). The actor’s responsibility is one of reproducing the script and its reality again, and again.

Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed. [...] As a consequence, gender cannot be understood as a *role* which either expresses or disguises an interior ‘self’, whether that ‘self’ is conceived as sexed or not. As performance which is performative, gender is an ‘act’, broadly construed, which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority.

[...] Performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all. (BUTLER 1988: 527-8)

Butler underlines the performativity of gender, its activeness, and rejects the idea of gender as a role, as an entity that is bestowed upon a "self". Rather, the interior "self" actively constructs and reconstructs "social fiction" according to a certain script which then epitomises as gender. Judith Hamera tried to subsume Butler's concept, explaining that performativity materializes as performance just as doing creates something done. Individual performances make discursive conventions that frame our interpretation – make performativity material – and through that facilitate the reiteration of norms (cf. HAMERA 2006: 51).

With her notion that gender can be performed along appropriate and inappropriate lines, Butler again supports the concept of audience evaluation and the preexistence of a script along whose lines the performance is expected to be done. I would like to finish my outlook with a quote by Tracy C. Davis:

The performative turn is variously, fluidly, and playfully a turn, yes, but a turn that is alternately a technique of dance (pirouette), leads to an unconventional routing (detour), champions social change (revolution, social or otherwise), bends for new use (deflection), proudly questions the culturally normative (deviation), like a sail propels us forward yet is obliquely positioned to the wind (tack), and though unsteady is wide open (yaw), depending upon what is apt. (DAVIS 2008: 2)

The New Zealand state of the art is quickly subsumed: the field of performance theory that I have chosen as a theoretical lens through which I will examine the masculinities in the given texts, has not been picked up by New Zealand research at all. Mainly, cultural studies research has limited itself to the treatise of cultural performances, primarily *Māori cultural performances* such as the haka (Māori war challenge) before an All Blacks' rugby football match, and although gender and especially New Zealand masculinity has been the focus of many a research, little if

anything has been published on the *performance* of gender and the *performativity* of gender identity.

Performances “tell stories” as Richard Schechner said (2006: 28). This thesis aims to find out what stories the performances of New Zealand masculinities in short stories by male New Zealand authors tell us, of their culture, their country, their nation, their identity. I want to know the stories they tell us through their performances. What slice of New Zealand identity do performances evoke? How does the slice produce cultural values, identities, institutions, and desires? What possibilities for breaking those structures and protocols are contained there? How do specific cultural frames limit the possibilities within this cultural stage? How does the cultural frame offer a system for interpretation and serve as instructions for both audience and actor implicit? What is the body supposed to look like and how is it supposed to move within this cultural frame? Indeed, most hotly burns the question of how the performances of masculinity provide us with colourful clues about their *New Zealandness*, that wish for “magical togetherness” which the next chapter means to shed light upon.

## **THE CRAVING FOR MAGICAL TOGETHERNESS - IMAGINED COMMUNITIES AND NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

The concinnity of “magical” and “togetherness” is Edith Turner’s from 2004 (cf. 98) when she talks about rites and rituals of so-called “communitas”, a term her husband Victor Turner picked up four decades earlier, as she mentions. For the anthropologist Turners, *communitas*, a small-scale face-to-face togetherness, is clearly differentiated from the term “community” which implies too strongly a denotation of a group of people in a specific location and structure. *Communitas*, however, denotes a specific “mode of social relations that obtains between indi-

viduals who share a common bond, that bond being their shared ritual movement [...] passing through, as it were, a distinctly 'non-structural' [...] stage" (HOUK 2004: 96). The Turners use *communitas* to refer to "relational quality of [...] communication, even communion, between people of definite and determinate identity" (TURNER 2004: 97). "There is a loss of ego; the self becomes irrelevant" (TURNER 2004: 99). Elizabeth Bell fittingly sums up: "[C]ommunitas is *normative*: It is characterized by "we" feelings, a loyalty to the group, and a willingness to sacrifice for it" (BELL 2008: 134).

*Communitas* is thus a kind of congregation united by one "magical" idea or ideology, in which the individual dissolves as if being a part of a flock of birds, which is not regulated or steered from the outside but underlies regulations emerging from within the flock. Such a congregation creates identity, and for that matter, the performance by the individual within the group epitomises as a certain identity, which is then naturalised, perceived as the norm and rendered invisible. The willingness to sacrifice for such an identity belonging bestows it with a touch of religiousness, magic.

While *communitas* is an anthropological term for small-scale face-to-face communities, the magical togetherness that I have chosen as subject of my investigation works on a much bigger scale and is performed in a huge arena in which the players are unaware of their teammates: the magical togetherness of national belonging, more specifically, New Zealand national identity. "What, then, is a nation and how is it (re)created?" is a question that has been asked many a time before and for over a century has occupied the minds of philosophers, anthropologists and cultural scientists likewise.

Perhaps the most fundamental account on the definition of nation and the accordingly emerging identity can be found in Ernest Renan's hands and lecture "Qu'est-

ce qu'une nation?" from 1882 translated again as "What is a nation?" in Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration*. Looking at the development of modern nations through the interpretation of historical events, he points out that race, language and geography are not the premises on which nations are forged. "There is something in man which is superior to language[, race and geography], namely, the will [...] to be united" (RENAN 1990: 16). As humans, Renan says, we long for this magical togetherness that gives us identity and belonging. With the notion of a "will" to be united Renan sets the most profound concept for studies on national identity: that indeed national belonging is an abstractum, a wish, a craving in the heads of human beings. Benedict Anderson, one of the big names in the studies of national identity, will much later recall Renan's early ideas.

Renan stresses the importance of historical or ideological continuity as a basis on which to shape a nation and national identity, not apt to resist an obvious touch of nostalgic religiousness:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. [...] To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are the essential conditions for being a people. [...] A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. (RENAN 1990: 19)

Renan emphasises two points which prove crucial when analysing national identity formation: the performance of "great deeds" in the past and the present will to perform even more in the future. Historical continuity, shared events in the past trigger or are even willingly appropriated as triggers for the present will for unification and for a future togetherness. Renan's ideas of historical continuity and hu-

man will set the headstone for studies on national identity for the following twelve decades, when his philosophies will be built upon by Benedict Anderson:

Renan's "will to be united" triggers the active creation of an abstract imagination allowing for a continuation of history in the future; the craving for national belonging gives the impetus for what Benedict Anderson's calls an *imagined community* – Renan's wish of unification gives way to Anderson's "imagination" of togetherness. Benedict Anderson examines the processes that create national identity in his seminal work *Imagined Communities* (1991). The title conveys Anderson's principal concept, namely that of *imagined* commonality on national scale. His argument is rooted in the genuine truth that in contrast to small-scale communities

all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined [and] will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (ANDERSON 1991: 6)

Thus, it is the physical detachment of member of a community and the sheer size in numbers that forces the members to imagine their togetherness. Anderson analyses the successful development of Latin vernaculars through their wide distribution in the medium of print in Europe and their importance on deep "horizontal" (male) bonding – "fraternity" (ANDERSON 1991: 16) – that at the time allowed and enables still the members of such imagined communities "not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (ANDERSON 1991: 7). Anderson's notion of 'vernacular-national' imagined communities underline the importance of language as the creator or creative lubricant of national identity formation: "What the eye is to the lover – [...] language [...] is to the patriot" (ANDERSON 1991: 154). "Cultural products of nationalism" (ANDERSON 1991: 141) – art forms and media such as literature, music, film etc. all (re)create and consolidate national belonging and further the naturalisation of a certain hegemonic entity within the national understanding. Interestingly, Anderson already uses the gendered term "fraternity" and

implies thus a wilful genderedness in the process of national identity formation supported by cultural media and specific language to bestow upon the community's members the willingness to offer the ultimate sacrifice to the "nation". The genderedness of national affiliation and the appropriation of its cultural products to bolster and naturalise the strict gender segregation will become most visible when scrutinising New Zealand gender identity performativity.

Although continuity of culture and cultural history is one of the crucial characteristics of nationalism, Anderson praises the American Declaration of Independence for its "radical break with the past" and subsequently "profound sense of newness" that unified the country's founding fathers (ANDERSON 1991: 193). What Anderson interestingly implies is a rejection of the concept of imperative historical continuity allowing for a present will to perform common deeds in the future. The present will to detach from the past and create a new future seems to be precondition enough to start anew. Benedict Anderson thus transfers Renan's theories concerning nation formation in the old world into the realms of the postcolonial and post-settler communities where the wilful contrasting of the young "self" to the old "other" proved essential to identity formation. The young postsettler "self" had the chance and the obligation to start anew and in active negotiations decide for itself which events and cultural discourses to bestow the attribute national with and render national narration and nationally iconic events.

Continuing Anderson's break with historical continuity, as past is but constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by imagination, Homi Bhabha too bases his studies on the assumption that the notion of history and therefore nation are in constant process of re-evaluation, renegotiation and re-narration, therefore national identity and national narration are not destiny but choice (cf. BHABHA 1994: 2). If national identity is created by choice, by will, who is it coming to the decisions; whose will manifests as national identity and what institutions or discourses are served by these decisions? New Zealand as one of the world's "younger" nations



and states reveals in its cultural narrations and historically iconic events, as has already been broached in the first part of this work, that the processes of nation forging and the (re)creation of national identity worked along gendered lines, proceeded gender-consciously. The strict gender segregation and the invention of the Cult of Domesticity served the masculine way of life and thus the New Zealand way of life.

Benedict Anderson's "fraternity" and horizontal male bonding deeply implies what gave way to a small number of seminal studies on the linkages of national and gender identities and the nation as a gendered institution: George Mosse's early 1985 *Nationalisms and Sexuality* led ahead and allowed for Andrew Parker et al. to examine the same linkages in the 1992 collection, *Nationalisms & Sexualities*, and motivated Nira Yuval-Davis to *Gender & Nation* (1997). The year 2000 saw the well-mended *Gender Ironies of Nationalism* by geographer Tamar Mayer.

George Mosse observes in his analysis of modern European nation formation that "nationalism had a special affinity for male society and together with the concept of respectability legitimized the dominance of men over women" (MOSSE 1985: 67). Mosse traces the linkages between sexuality and "the most powerful ideology of modern times" (MOSSE 1985: 1) through the history of middle-class Europe. The development of nations and nationalism proceeded along gendered (middle-class) lines. Mosse states that

[t]he nation was attempting to provide symbols with which the people could identify. The national flag, the national anthem, the national monuments all date from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and so do the male and female national stereotypes. (MOSSE 1985: 16)

He goes on to argue that the national stereotype equalled the male middle-class stereotype. Bourgeois masculinity had become the national norm in Europe.

In their 1992 collection, Andrew Parker et al. work with Anderson's and Mosse's ideas and extrapolate their results into postcolonial realms. "Passionate brotherhood" (PARKER ET AL. 1992: 6) is what they call a nation and they deem that "crises of post-colonial identity are typically elaborated as crises of gender and sexuality" (PARKER ET AL. 1992: 9). Postcolonial identity formation and nation building are thus played in a gendered arena.

In 1997, Nira Yuval-Davis stressed the importance of a "common destiny" that is "oriented towards the future, rather than just the past" (YUVAL-DAVIS 1997: 19) particularly in settler societies and postcolonial states that have "no shared myth of common origin" (YUVAL-DAVIS 1997: 19), thus perpetuating Anderson's notion. She also designated nations as fictions whose effect is "to naturalize the hegemony of one collectivity and its access to the ideological apparatus of both state and civil society. [...] It constructs minorities into assumed deviants from the 'normal', and excludes them from important power resources" (YUVAL-DAVIS 1997: 11). Subsequently, Yuval-Davis' question "Why, then, are women usually 'hidden' in the various theorizations of the nationalist phenomena?" (YUVAL-DAVIS 1997: 2) has to be answered with another question essential to the scope of this work: Why, then, are only certain masculinities "visible" in the various theorisations of the nationalist phenomena? Why is it only a few chosen masculinities that retain the ability to epitomise New Zealandness? These questions have been thoroughly answered by the afore mentioned James and Saville-Smith (1999) and will find further pursuit in the course of this work.

The year 2000 saw the publication of Tamar Mayer's collection on *Gender Ironies of Nationalism*. She succeeds in mending together the streams of postcolonial studies, gender studies and national identity formation:

The nation is comprised of sexed subjects whose "performativity" constructs not only their own gender identity but the identity of the entire

nation as well. Through repetition of accepted norms and behaviors – control over reproduction, militarism and heroism, and heterosexuality – members help to construct the privileged nation; equally, the repetitive performance of these acts in the name of the nation helps to construct gender and sexuality. Moreover, because nation, gender and sexuality are all constructed in opposition, or at least in relation to, an(O)ther, they are all part of culturally constructed hierarchies, and all of them involve power. One nation, one gender and one particular sexuality is always favored by the social, political and cultural institutions which it helps to construct and which it benefits from. (MAYER 2000: 5)

In this one paragraph, Mayer successfully explains the linkages between gender, sexuality, nation and power. The nation naturalises and justifies these linkages by “constructing myths about national creation and by defining ‘proper behaviors’ for members of the nation and for the nation itself” (MAYER 2000: 10). The media through which the myths are sustained, re-created and consolidated are very much Anderson’s “cultural products of nationalism”: “The ‘ideal’ nation and its ‘model’ are represented in arts, literature and the media, in public speeches and in the writing of the nation’s leaders – in every medium through which the nation is mobilized” (MAYER 2000: 10).

Literature on New Zealand national and cultural identities has been mainly descriptive, mainly divided into the binary of Pākehā and Māori, and mainly focused on Pākehā identity, specifically male Pākehā identity: First and foremost, historian Michael King left his marks with his numerous publications on Pākehā identity: *Being Pakeha* (1985), *Pakeha: The Quest for Identity in New Zealand* (1991), and *Being Pakeha Now: Reflections and Recollections of a White Native* (1999). Claudia Bell, senior lecturer at the department of Sociology at the University of Auckland, has published several studies on New Zealand identity, the most prominent being *Inventing New Zealand: Everyday Myths of Pakeha Identity* (1996); and she edited the performativity studies based *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand – Identity, Space and Place* (2004) together with Steve Matthewman.

The academic trend in New Zealand in recent years has pointed toward an acceptance of the diversity of New Zealand national collocation. In 2005, Liu et al. studied *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations*. Tim McCreanor pins it down: "Multiculturalism in which minority and immigrant groups add spice and colour to the mainstream society is the preferred model" (McCREANOR 2005: 59). "Diversity is the new national identity, so to speak", (McCREANOR 2005: 150) writes Zodgekar and embraces the academic trend of Liu's anthology. Numerous publications, studies and articles have dealt with the negotiation of New Zealand identity, and its manifestation as a bicultural reality, a hybrid reality, a multicultural reality (for example Dugdale 2000, Jones 2000, Stachurski 2009, Fox 2010). All of which seem, however, unsatisfying which is a sign that identity in New Zealand remains indeed an unfinished business.

New Zealand history and narration is pervaded with the endeavours to create myths and narratives that could then be appropriated to support, confirm and render natural a specific national identity that would then, consequently, stabilise the political system of the nation-state. Because New Zealand as a settler nation lacks the common glories of the past, it was able to choose consciously what would allow for a shared future and in the worst case to commit oneself to the ultimate sacrifice and die for the magical togetherness. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the myths and narrations the nation identity is built upon remain mainly in the hands of men. From the myth of the Man Alone, the pioneering mate, the national commemoration of two world wars and the ahistorical bastion of rugby football are all manifestations of national narrations, myths used to negotiate and naturalise a specific identity, a specific gender, and a specific sexuality. By recognising these shared pasts and their potential to provide futurity one becomes a nationalist. Women have been made to support a nationalism they were and are no part of. To secure their support nonetheless, hegemonic forces and processes of naturalisation are at work. How these processes of naturalisation, hegemonic myths and national narrations find manifestation and perpetuation in short fictions of New Zealand and

where the linkages are between the performativity of masculinity and nationalism shall be investigated thoroughly in the main chapters of the work.

Recent New Zealand academic interest in their national identity formation has borne a wonderfully telling institution under director Alistair Fox: the CRNI – the Centre for Research on National Identity, at the University of Otago in Dunedin. The website welcomes the visitor with the following homepage:



The man walking into the open, vast and uninhabited countryside immediately evokes the myth of the Man Alone, the pioneer roaming the countryside, mastering nature. His only companions are the dogs, most probably female dogs – his only female companions.

The mere existence of a Centre for Research on National Identity is evidence of the academic interest of the four-million nation in its own construction and in the mechanisms and processes of how a nationally magical togetherness is reproduced. The Centre also provides a platform on which criticism can be uttered, concerning the popular promotion of New Zealand national identity through for ex-

ample the controversial Saatchi&Saatchi's 100% Pure New Zealand campaign. The poster campaign was launched in 1999 and aimed at promoting the sales of national products and market the image of the country by the depiction of pristine landscapes in the Southern Alps and the slogan 100% Pure New Zealand. The governmentally-supported campaign was considered problematic in academic circles as the depiction of the Southern Alps in connection with the attribute "pure" obliterated the social and cultural (especially Māori) geography of the actual landscape (cf. Interview Ian Wedde, London, April 17 2008). Ian Wedde, author, scholar and critic of the 100% Pure New Zealand campaign, lays open the government's interference and disturbing attempt to direct national identity by the emphasise on one hegemonic image: "The government adopted it as part of its strategy for a kind of national identity that is about being singular, about being white [...] instead of being complex, being narrativised, being full of history, being full of contradictions in real" (Interview April 2009). Critical voices succeeded in hustling the inventor's of the campaign into emending the concept. Wedde says: "It was interesting to watch it change. First, they introduced people – that was the most obvious issue, then they introduced more colour and thirdly, they introduced Māori" (Interview April 2009). Ignorant of the problematic, the campaign is still in use today, and celebrated its ten-year anniversary in 2009 and is exemplary of its successful nation branding, so says the New Zealand Tourist Board.

Identity is a process and it seems that New Zealand national identity remains in constant movement and negotiation. In his historical novel *The Book of Fame* (2008), Lloyd Jones recounts the myth of the 1905 All Blacks touring successfully through the British Isles, France and the United States of America. The twenty-seven players formed the first New Zealand national rugby union team in the history of the young nation and are referred to as "The Originals". They played a total of thirty-five matches and lost only one, to Wales, and established New Zealand as a word class rugby nation. Lloyd Jones delineates very insightfully what went through the heads of the few young men who set out to sail to England: "The larger

sense of who we were hadn't yet forged itself. [...] Being nowhere in particular, and without traditions to adhere to, we could be whatever or whoever we chose" (JONES 2008: 3; 6). In his fiction, Jones incorporates the concepts of choice and wilful break with history in order to establish a nation of their own in the gendered realm of New Zealand rugby football.

Because it is such a young nation, one can observe the politics of identity performance in New Zealand: As national identity is the manifestation of gender performativity, the manifestations of the masculinities in the short stories will shed light upon the processes of New Zealand national identity formation.

## 1 IMITATING TRADITION

### 1.1 PERFORMING DOMINATION: "THE BIG GAME" (1944)

In New Zealand culture you're looking at the All Blacks. You don't in a way – you don't get much more *manly* than that. (Voice 21 in FERGUSON 2004: 76)

It seems decorous to begin an analysis of New Zealand masculinities with a story on the national sport of rugby football and a brief introduction to the sport in New Zealand. An import from Great Britain, rugby football enjoyed great popularity as a community sport in small-town New Zealand from the late nineteenth century on. Reasons for the sport's popularity are rooted in postcolonial desires of detachment from the mother country and chance: Because (male!) New Zealanders happened to be good at playing rugby their sportive endeavours bolstered their developing national pride by tearing their colonial mother country to shreds on the rugby field. The sensation was pre-programmed when in 1905, the Original All Blacks, also referred to as "the Originals", toured the British Isles and remained undefeated except for the game against Wales. In his history of New Zealand Michael King stresses the inclusive characteristic of the game to attract (male!) players and supporters of both Pākehā and Māori, practically all classes and occupations and from both cities and the country:

For New Zealand men as a whole [...] playing a following rugby was the great common denominator they could share as players and supporters and as a sure-fire topic for socially bonding conversation. In most New Zealand schools before the war it was the only male winter sport available, and in many of them participation was compulsory. [...] [R]ugby was, along with drinking in public bars, one of the twin pillars of New Zealand male culture. (KING 2003: 387)



King emphasises the universality of rugby as a New Zealand male experience and its potential to serve as a base for a collective, a *national* experience. Distinguished players “acquired the status of national heroes in their playing days” (KING 2003: 387). How they could acquire the status of national heroes is explained by Easterbrook and his thesis where he admits in the preface: “I still felt that it was normal – and possibly essential – to have an active interest in the game in order to be a male in this country” (EASTERBROOK 2001: 3). Easterbrook argues that rugby football in New Zealand makes up for the lack of a truly foundational, historical event:

Sport especially provided a tool for forging the disparate new land into a nation, through organisation and the encouragement of regional, local or national pride and loyalty. [...] Rugby [...] is a lens through which a large proportion of the population view what it is to be masculine and what it is to be a New Zealander, and is a barometer of our self-perceived relevance on the world stage. It is the public display of many of the myths [...] that shape New Zealand's cultural identity; the rugby field is the arena where the national myths of a virile, egalitarian, classless and bicultural society seem to be shown as self-evident truths. (EASTERBROOK 2001: 15)

This is all possible through one specific characteristic inherent to sport: its “ahistoricalness” – its false sentiment of “quasi-history” (EASTERBROOK 2001: 15). This also helped to create an aura around the players, entitling them the status of national heroes and regard them throughout much of the twentieth century as agents or ambassadors for the nation. Chris Laidlaw, former All Black and columnist, called rugby a game “which has worked its way, like a mutating virus, into the bloodstream of a nation” (LAIDLAW 2005: 17). Laidlaw alludes of course to the contagious and destructive by-products of rugby football (such as domestic violence and a fierce hegemonic imagination of masculinity) and its mystification as being ‘more than just sport’ and the players ‘more than just men’.

Guy Body, a regular cartoonist with the New Zealand herald, responds to the 2007 'National statement of diversity' which deemed that there was no state religion with a cartoon in which a bishop wonders about the governments assertion since under his mitre he carries a rugby ball. The enthusiasm about rugby football in New Zealand proved fertile ground for



Guy Body in *Landfall* 215 (May 2008)

national myths and narration that found thorough recent deconstruction in Greg Ryan's *Tackling Rugby Myths*.

That the arena of rugby football remained and remains an exclusively male territory has to do with the reconciliation of the two manifestations of the Man Alone and the Family Man. With the emergence of the Family Man promoted by the Cult of Domesticity came the outsourcing of male socialising and mateship into spaces that would henceforth be dominated by men only: sports, pubs and other sites of leisure. Women were banned to the sidelines as spectators and supporters (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 40-2). They had no place in this world. This fact renders the deployment of rugby football as a means to form a collective memory and identity yet another all-male experience. Rugby completes the tripod of national 'events', adding to the narratives on World War I and World War II. All three events give rise to specific, hegemonic, exclusive and elitist imaginations of New Zealand masculinity and are often named in the same breath, so for example in a version of 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow' in Greg McGee's *Foreskin's Lament*: "It's the way it was in the army / The way it was in the navy / Way it is on the football field / And so say all of us" (MCGEE 1981: 57).

Numerous academic publications and articles have recently been written on the mystified status of rugby in New Zealand (for example Hughes 2001, Easterbrook

2001, Ferguson 2004 and Ryan 2005) and rugby remains the topic number one on many a bar, table and couch. Considering the importance of rugby football and the role of the All Blacks in the construction of an imaginary national commonality and the public interest in both, it comes as a surprise that there is a great tradition of New Zealand fiction authors to ignore sport.

The four most well known texts that are set in rugby realm are A.P. Gaskell's short story "The Big Game" (1944), Maurice Gee's novel *The Big Season* (1962) – both in praise of the hardships of the game – Lloyd Jones' novel *The Book of Fame* (2008) and perhaps most notably Greg McGee's play *Foreskin's Lament* (1981), demystifying the national sport and hegemonic construction of masculinity and denouncing the misogyny and homophobia circling rugby discourse. Considering the focus on short stories in this thesis, one text remains: "The Big Game".

Alexander Gaskell Pickard was born in 1913 and died in 2006 and held a teaching and rugby coaching position until his retirement in the 1970s along with his short story writing. During his years in high school he proved an excellent student and captain of the first XV (the core cadre of a rugby football team). "The Big Game", the short story Gaskell is most lauded for, was first published in 1944 in the *Listener* and intrigues first and foremost because it illustrates the occurrences and rituals *between* two games, with the narration starting at the end of the first match and concluding with the kick-off of the second, the "big" final.

Bennie, a player among the first XV in the team "Varsity A", is the character through whose eyes we experience the sentiments of rugby culture after the semi-final and on the day of the final. He leaves the empty rugby field reminiscent of a mystified battlefield immersed in silence after the fight. Bennie walks back to the dressing room after Varsity A's successful match against Kaikorai wearing a

“steaming jersey” (GASKELL 1970: 34). The door to the changing room opens up into an atmosphere is graphically masculine and does not dispense with erotic appeal:

Inside the dressing room there was a strong human smell of sweaty togs, muddy boots and warm bodies as the men came prancing back naked from the showers and stood on the seats drying themselves. The room was crowded. Togs and boots lay over the floor, clothes hung emptily from the pegs, and men were everywhere, shoving, jostling, reaching out their arms to dry themselves or climb into a shirt and taking up more room. Everybody was happy now that the strain was over, talking, yelling, singing, intent on their warmth and comfort. (GASKELL 1970: 34)

Human smell, warm bodies, prancing naked men: the sensual experience of the scenery in the locker room is illustrious. The boys are clearly at ease in their homosocial intimacy, establishing male bonding through the collective sharing of bodily experiences. A changing room full of sweaty or freshly showered sportsmen kidding around is a perfect stage for performances deployed to reaffirm masculinities and positive virtues of masculine bonding.

The cosiness of homosociality of prancing naked men does not appear latently homoerotic to the male reader of 1944 – quite the contrary, it epitomises the discourse of New Zealand heterosexual masculinity and its desired homosociality (which by definition constitutes nonsexual attraction between members of their own sex), in this moment and location. The paradox and ambiguity of the situation is obvious: “the body contact of football [...], the exposure of naked sportsmen in locker rooms and showers, all proceed under the assumption that no one involved is aware of the erotic potential of these phenomena, that everyone is heterosexual” (PRONGER 1990a: 9). New Zealand rugby football discourse is a thoroughly heterosexual discourse. Only under this premise is it possible to interpret the boys’ activities and behavioural patterns as heterosexual. Within the context of rugby, behaviour that would lead to negative sanctions were it performed elsewhere is accepted as appropriate and recognised as heterosexual.

The boys indulge in playfully recapitulating the game in typical rugby lingo and like pups negotiate their own dominance over others by taking sides, degrading successful manoeuvres of other players, and celebrating their own tactical achievements. They do so tongue in cheek and “amiably” (GASKELL 1970: 34): egalitarian mates pulling each others’ legs, kidding about and celebrating their *male bonding*:

‘Did she see my try? What did it look like from the stand?’ [roared Buck as I came in.]

‘They couldn’t see it from the stand,’ I said. ‘They all thought you’d torn your pants when we gathered round you. Nobody knew it was a try.’ [...]

‘Bloody liar,’ said Buck amiably. ‘It was a damn good try.’ He had a very powerful voice. [...]

‘What try?’ said Mac, our captain. ‘Hell, you aren’t going to claim anything for that bit of a scuffle? You were a mile offside.’ His head disappeared into his short and came grinning out the top. [...]

‘Yes, a typical forward’s try,’ said Bob, our half-back. He was small and very sturdy and freckled. ‘Big bullocking bastards always mauling each other about. Why can’t you do something nice and clean-cut like the backs?’

‘The backs? The pansies? I sweat my guts out getting the ball for you and then you canter along very prettily about ten yards and then drop it.’ He struck a chesty attitude standing naked on the seat. ‘Do I look like a pansy?’ (GASKELL 1970: 34-5)

The playing down of each other’s sportive successes is presented as ritualised negotiation and assertion of each other’s masculinities. It is an attempt to establish yet another hierarchy within this dominant discourse of masculinity. By differentiating between the positions in the team, specific hierarchies become visible: the forwards in self and extrinsic depiction take in a dominant position associated with their physical bulkiness (“big bullocking bastards”), whereas the backs see themselves as “nice and clean-cut” which is turned into a derogatory effeminate quality typically conveyed by name-calling (“the pansies”). The usage of linguistic entities denoting people engaging in homosexual practices for derogatory intentions is not unusual: the “pansy” associated with aspects of the effeminate deprives the ascertained person of important dominant aspects of masculinity. The forward thus de-

prives the back of the ability to encompass certain dominant aspects of masculinity and reaffirms his own hegemonic position within the discourse. He poses his naked male body, his bulkiness asking the rhetorical question "Do I look like a pansy?" He performs his body to achieve a dominant position over the body of the back player who simultaneously is lessened in his masculinity. He relies on the discourse of masculinity favouring a certain body type that is 'manlier' and the subordination of others that are 'less manly'. Of course, this is all done jocularly and playfully since the fact that all of the people involved are rugby players and thus a generally dominant masculinity, but it reveals ritualised processes of masculine identity negotiations and *mêlée* between the masculinities striving for the dominant position even within dominant discourse.

Bennie meets a player from the opposing side in the shower room. Continuing the virtue of being fair sportsmen they tap on each other's shoulders and congratulate each other on the satisfactory game:

One of the Kaikorai men was still in the shower-room. 'How are you now?' he said.

'Pretty tired. It was a tough game.'

'We didn't want you to have it too easy. You jokers will be playing off with Southern now.'

'Yes. The big championship. Next Saturday.'

'Think you'll lick them?'

'Hope so. We'll give them a good go, especially if it's a dry ground.'

'Their forwards are good. Pack very low. Well good luck.'

'Thanks.' (GASKELL 1970: 35)

Their conversation is a mere acknowledgment of their masculinities. Since both of them are exponents of a strong hegemonic discourse of New Zealand masculinity and since the score of the game just confirmed whose 'manliness' is 'manlier' than the other's there is no more negotiation needed.

The sexually loaded metaphors of “licking” the other team and “giving them a good go” are typical in the arena of sports. To ‘lick’ as an act of oral sex usually performed on a woman and female genitalia decimates the masculinity of the opposing team by the allegation of effeminacy. The possession of female genitalia dispossesses the opponents of the phallus. Since the system of patriarchy enables the phallus to convey understandings of power and domination, the denial or lack thereof means a cut in power. To “give them a good go” invokes a similar connotation: the exertion of sexual activity on a ‘passive’ recipient puts the latter into an effeminate less ‘manly’ position subordinates his masculinity below the performer of sexual domination. Sport and here specifically New Zealand rugby football proves a conservative and reactionary arena in which gendering is exacted in meticulous fashion and is a monolith that renders itself nearly impossible to mould. The medium through which the gendering is exacted is the body, between female and male bodies, and between male and male bodies – the inferior male body being attached with aspects of the female body. The following passage further illustrates the procedure of reaffirming one’s own masculinity through assigning the opponent with aspects typically associated with the (female) weak body:

‘[The coach] says you’re to mark Jackie Hore on Saturday,’ grinned Bob.  
‘You’ve got to dominate him.’  
‘I can easy fix Yackie,’ I said. ‘I bumped into him one game last season and he fell over. Fell right over from just a little bump. He’s a softie.’  
(GASKELL 1970: 36)

Bennie consolidates his dominant position over the expected opponent by lessening the latter’s masculinity in depriving him of physical strength and applying the effeminate characteristic of softness on his body.

On their way home from the game, Bennie asks Mac the team captain about their chances in the big game:

'Well Mac,' I said, 'how does the skipper feel about our chances? Our great public would like to know. Would you care to make a statement?' We often did these cross-talk acts.

'I think I may say with all due respect that we are quietly confident,' said Mac. 'Tell our public that the same spirit of healthy rivalry that has spurred on our predecessors will again be found animating the bosoms of this year's team. Tell them that the game of Rugby fosters the team spirit and is the basis of our democracy.' (GASKELL 1970: 36-7)

Mac the team captain parrots national narration on rugby football and myths associated with the sport that the state saw fit for the formation of collective identity that served their interests. The imagined situation of a press conference adds the pathos in Mac's statement; he knows what the public would want to hear. He establishes continuity by referring back to predecessors, an inkling of the glories of the past that give meaning and purpose to their *doing* now. He seasons the speech to taste with the popular celebration of the sport's virtues that are crucial to the persistence of the state and the nation. Mac confirms the higher purpose of the sport. It is deployed for the promotion of the greater good of the nation – it is the "basis" of New Zealand democracy and the reason why it works. The rugby player as deliverer of the sport is rendered an exemplary specimen of a New Zealander – the immaculate ideal everybody should strive for. He comes to serve as an agent of the whole nation.

The coach's kindling speech during team-talk the day before the next big match is a firework of hegemonic ideology, preaching with sexually loaded entities as allegories for dominant masculinity:

'Into them! Dominate them! And every man when he sees where the ball goes, he thinks, "There's Buck in. I'm in too." Into them! And every man is thinking the same and we're all animated with the same spirit, we're going in to dominate them and we pack in tight and we're giving all our weight and strength and we're thinking together and working together and no one lets up. Dominate them.' (GASKELL 1970: 38-9)



The coach pleads them to work as one fighting unit and attempts to strengthen their team spirit. He is preaching to his boys to “into them”, to penetrate the opponents: Yet again, the sexual connotation of penetration renders the opposing team the recipients of sexual violation, depriving them of their dominant position within masculine discourse and bestowing them with aspects of femininity and effeminacy. By penetrating the opponents they may prove and affirm their own dominant position.

Before the big game, a ritual takes place in the dressing room: “Soon the trainer came in and started to rub us down. The room was filled with the smell of eucalyptus and the rapid slap slap slap of his hands. It was a great feeling being done, he made us feel nice and loose and warm and free-moving” (GASKELL 1970: 41). In the changing room, as has been stated earlier, the rules are special. Although a reader might marvel at the homoerotic potential of the description, Gaskell basically conforms to the specificities of the masculine space of rugby, the dressing room, and physical components of homosocial closeness. Homosocial intimacies and physical closeness between the boys and their trainer is possible without carrying homoerotic inclination. The ritualisation of the act, its ritualised repetition, helps to construct a safe ground for it where intimate physical contact between men may not be of homoerotic nature but a means for male bonding and team spirit.

One point that still needs to be drawn attention to is the rigorous exclusion of women in Gaskell’s story. Bennie’s girlfriend of whom we only briefly hear remains, quite typically, in the spaces of supporter and spectator of rugby football. Bennie ponders: “I was lucky to have a girl like Betty who was keen on football. Some of the girls used to go very snooty when the blokes couldn’t take them to the Friday-nights hops” (GASKELL 1970: 39). A successful rugby player is in need of a supportive partner who is content with being present at the games as spectator only and reaffirms the player’s masculinity through the rigorous repeated separation of male and female spaces.

Gaskell's story is a pirouette with closed eyes: It joyfully twirls around and thus reaffirms the myths associated with New Zealand rugby football and ignores the unofficial narrations of rugby as highly misogynist, homophobic arena associated with swearing, drunken disorder and violence against subordinate masculinities, women and children. Gaskell limns the New Zealand rugby football scene benevolently and jingoistically, not pointing his finger at the destructive and negative impact that rugby discourse has. "The Big Game" is a celebration of the positive aspects that rugby football might have on the manifestation of New Zealand masculinity: egalitarian mateship, physical hardship, loyalty and respect: aspects as valued by the nation enabling the sport to linger on still conservatively as a narrative of hegemonic masculinity, despite numerous attempts of deconstruction and demythologising in the written form of academic interest (*Tackling Rugby Myths* 2005), playwriting (*Foreskin's Lament* 1981), cartoons (by award-winning cartoonists such as Peter Bromhead, Bob Brockie, Chris Slane, Jim Hubbard and Murray Webb) and film (*A Taste of Kiwi* 1990). Virtues the nation promotes are inherent in the mythologies around male rugby players: they express strength and power, physically as well as mentally, gentlemanliness, loyalty and above all: heterosexuality. The Rugby Player is indeed an agent of the nation and conservative promoter for the nation, anachronistically so but nevertheless successful and supported by adjacent femininities. When the Rugby World Cup will take place in New Zealand in 2011, one will be able to see how much this is still the case.

## **1.2 KIWI, BY NECESSITY: "A MARRIED MAN" (1959)**

It is strange that the late O.E. Middleton remains one of the lesser known writers of New Zealand, even though his writing has been read for over half a century now. Born in 1925, Middleton died in 2010 at the age of eighty-five. Lawrence Jones collected a fair overview of the author's short stories in 2008: *Beyond the Breakwater*. In the introduction, he categorises Middleton as a "second generation" (in MIDDLETON 2008: 7) New Zealand writer, the first generation writers being Frank Sar-

geson, Denis Glover, Charles Brasch and the like. After Middleton and Sargeson met in 1948, Sargeson became Middleton's mentor, benefactor, supporter and a close friend to the writer who by the time had started to go blind (cf. JONES in MIDDLETON 2008: 8). Middleton's income had never been solely made up by his writing and he worked in various fields of jobs, such as farmer, seafarer, worker in various areas, teacher, telephonist and gardener (cf. JONES in MIDDLETON 2008: 9). To be sure, his life and working experiences have raised his awareness and deepened his empathy for fellow male workers and informed his writing. Middleton "retain[s] the Sargesonian areas of the working-class male, [...]" but from 'A Married Man' onwards there are increasingly subtle judgements on more complex characters." His work has also been sharply criticised for being didactic and parabolic (cf. WILLIAMSON 1973). Middleton's development as a writer over the decades has not been regarded as massively ingenious, however "he has gone on writing and improving his kind of story within a male social realist tradition. It has been a career of continuity and development within than continuity" (JONES in MIDDLETON 2008: 13-4). The cultural and social environment in his stories remained throughout his career, but tone, voice and perspective changed (JONES in MIDDLETON 2008: 17). Jones sums up: "His sympathies throughout are with the working man, the dispossessed, the victims of discrimination, the inmates of coercive institutions [...] [a]lthough some of his characters are Men Alone, that is by necessity rather than choice" (JONES in MIDDLETON 2008: 15). The literary expression of this "necessity rather than choice" for his male protagonists to conform to the hegemonic version of masculine imagination reveals its destructiveness and accuses social, cultural and sexual restrictive assumptions of hegemonic New Zealand masculinities of insensitivity.

"A Married Man" was nominated "perhaps 'his best piece of sustained writing'" (JONES in MIDDLETON 2008: 10) by the author himself. It was first published in 1959 in the collection *The Stone and Other Stories* and is with twenty-four pages a longer piece of short writing. It tells of a married couple expecting their first child, their sentiments this entails and how they deal with the traumatic postnatal death of

their baby boy. Although Middleton allows a couple of insights into the wife's perspective, he stays with the husband, especially towards the end and during his repetition of stylised acts of dominant discourse of masculinity.

The first couple of pages give a vivid account of post-war New Zealand society and life and the negotiating shift from the Man Alone to the state-favoured role of the Family Man. Colleen is the wife's name, and she is married to Tony, thus the Married and Family Man. The loss of manpower due to New Zealand's participation in World War II brought with it rising demand in labour and made room for the women of the country to enter the job market. The aftermath of the war did not succeed in banning the female manpower back into the domestic sphere. So the story gives us Colleen and she earns almost as much as her husband Tony. Colleen's pregnancy causes Tony to perceive himself differently and brings about a change in his identity and subsequently his performances:

He was no longer just a fly-by-night cooper working at an hourly rate for one of the big meat concerns; somebody who could drift in and out of a job like a single man [...]. He was no longer just a newly-wed, but a father-to-be with responsibilities and an aim in life: someone to be reckoned with in any talk about education or the future. (MIDDLETON 2008: 75)

Tony's reflection on his new role is in accord with how the state wants him to assume it: with responsibility and loyalty (to the family), education and futurist sentiment (to the 'child of the state'). James and Saville-Smith explain in which aspects the Family Man differed from the Man Alone and where they linked:

Both the Family Man and the Man Alone celebrated qualities of hard work, dependability, pragmatism, self-reliance, and loyalty. But the Family Man had no associations with resistance against men in authority. [...] Indeed, the masculinity constructed through the Family Man demanded acceptance of any regulation imposed by involvement in wage labour. It also demanded that men make the privatized family the centre of their everyday lives. (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 39)

The state favoured married men over single men and deliberately arranged taxation, welfare and award rates accordingly. Tony, our married man and father to-be, connects a certain grown-up, settled sentiment with his role. He is no longer only responsible for himself, but has to be a supporter of his wife and future child. This sentiment also makes him proud. The state has drawn it clear: being a married man and father, Tony is a much more valuable member of society. The state with its powerful ability to make invisible certain intentions and processes has created in Tony a sensation of usefulness, not to the state, but in the world-making. He envisions himself now being part of something much bigger – his self-understanding is now formed not only by what he does for himself but also by what he has to do for others. Being only responsible for himself and his actions, the Man Alone proves himself useless to the nation and the state – he has no promise of a futurity within the systematicity of national and state processes whatsoever. Since reproduction is the key to futurity and positive outlook on a continuation of state interference, the Family Man is a highly valuable and desired manifestation of masculinity.

Admittedly though, one must not overrate Tony as a dependent of New Zealand state's benevolence. Indeed, Middleton uses many a page to exert Tony and Colleen's love and devotion to each other: theirs is true love. The fact that Middleton spends page after page establishing their relationship leads the reader to the assumption that their love for each other and their gentle intercourse stands out in the society of the time. Colleen's pregnancy is lived and experienced by both partners. Colleen clearly turns away from any puritan inkling: "they were not ashamed of their bodies or their love" (MIDDLETON 2008: 78). Tony, trained as a cooper, takes great pains to manufacture a cot for the baby's room.

Into the seventh month of pregnancy, Colleen is taken to hospital and gives a painful birth to a premature, weak little baby boy. Tony is notified, rushes to the hospital but is dismissed by the nurses. He has to wait at home all by himself and falls

into a pattern of stylised acts: "He opened a bottle of beer, and, when this was gone, another. It was a mild spring day and the beer was refreshing and made him feel better" (MIDDLETON 2008: 82). Tony repeats the established ritualised, stylised act of drinking that has been rehearsed equally by many other men and in many other contexts. The apparently mechanical, continuous drinking emphasises Tony's loss and lack of control over his own actions – he acts unconsciously, following a rehearsed 'style'. The act of drinking gives him a sense of belonging and stability; it gives him the illusion of control in a situation where everything lies in the hands of fate.

Tony is able to see his premature son, but shortly after the premature baby boy dies: This deep personal grief evokes in him the wish of burying his own child. When he explains his plans to the doctor, the doctor reacts perplexed:

'You mean you want to bury your own child?' The young doctor was astonished, curious. 'It's not usual,' he said, examining the young father's face more closely.

'It's just that it doesn't seem right to hand him over to those people ... those funeral directors ... when he's only just born. What do they know about him?' he said in a low choked voice, looking down. [...] *He thinks I'm cracked.* (MIDDLETON 2008: 88)

Tony's attempt to cope with his bereavement by burying his own son raises puzzlement – apparently it is not the norm for a father to bury his own child. This represents a harsh collectively cultural meddling with parents' personal process of overcoming bereavement, and in some cases might even prove an unhealthy intrusion into individual healing cultivating emotional inexpressiveness and numbness.

Tony starts to cope with the loss of his son with manufacturing a little heart matai (timber) casket for his dead baby boy. After having made a bed for the expected son, he makes his son's deathbed. Tony is taking great effort with the wearying task:

He opened another bottle of beer and began slowly to make screwholes with a small hand-drill. It was tedious, warm work, and he stopped often for a mouthful of beer. But there was no other way. He could never have driven nails into the tough red timber without their bending or the wood splitting. [...] [H]e became absorbed by his work, taking pains with it as though he were fashioning a fine matai cask. (MIDDLETON 2008: 89)

Tony is left alone to deal with his bereavement of burying his own child as his wife is still bound to the hospital bed. The building of his son's coffin is an act of mourning and of incipient working the inexplicable grief. To engage in physical, mechanical, rehearsed work gives Tony the space to engage the mind elsewhere and not feel alone and useless. That he combines manual work with the consumption of beer is stereotypically masculine and only helps Tony perhaps to associate the building of his son's little coffin with labour rather than coping with bereavement. Don a fellow-worker calls him in the evening and Tony tells him about his son's death. The conversation is pervaded by Kiwi protocol of male conversing and reciprocal assurance:

There was more real sympathy in Don's rough way than in all the polite 'expressions of sympathy' which came in the mail during the next few days.  
'Look, Mate,' he said. 'Don't let it get you. With a bit of luck you'll have other kids, and they'll be twice as precious to you....'  
'It's not so rough on me,' Tony said. 'It's Colleen who's feeling it.'  
'I know, I know,' said Don. Its [sic] always worse for the woman [...].'  
(MIDDLETON 2008: 89)

Tony is trapped within the masculine limitations of his cultural surrounding. Dominant imaginations of masculinity deny Tony the expression of the grief that he feels; he is not supposed to let emotions get hold of him. He undertook the tiresome task of building a coffin and he will bury his son himself; but this is the limit of how far his environment allows him to transport his mourning. In conversation with another *mate from work*, Tony immediately assumes a position within dominant discourse of masculinity that deems his pain as inferior to the agony of his wife. Tony does not concede the equal amount of grief to himself as he does to his

wife; the cultural setting to which he is bound does not allow him to concede it to himself; the cultural imagination of masculinities in his time and place does not benevolently provide him with available acts to express his sentiments. He has learned by heart to reject and suppress emotional pain. Sharon Bird claims in her study on the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity within the male homosocial group that “emotional detachment is viewed not only as desirable but as imperative. Those who do express their intimate emotions are excluded” (BIRD 1996: 125). The mourning father does not play a part in New Zealand discourse of masculinity of the time: One might want to circumscribe Tony’s refusal to act out his bereavement as typically New Zealand grieving masculinity, or what I would like to call *masculinised mourning*, for that is what is happening here: mourning as cultural behaviour is masculinised within New Zealand hegemonic discourses of masculinity. Grief is being *masculated* in opposition to the cultural assumption that the expression of grief is an *emasculated* feature attached to femininity. In order to masculinise the cultural expression of mourning it needs to be a performance of absence of grief: The New Zealand man in Middleton’s story does neither show nor vocalise his sentiments. *Masculinised mourning* in New Zealand terms equals a performance of the absence of mourning:

‘It’s not so rough on me,’ Tony said. ‘It’s Colleen who’s feeling it.’  
 ‘I know, I know,’ said Don. Its [sic] always worse for the woman [...].’  
 (MIDDLETON 2008: 89)

Tony’s masculinised mourning makes him wave sentiments of bereavement through to his wife. An acknowledgement on his part of his own bereavement means a threat to his masculinity. Don’s response affirms Tony’s favourable position within masculine discourse. By acknowledging the greater grief of women in situations of the death of a child, Don bolsters Tony’s masculinised mourning and reinforces the genderedness of cultural protocol on overcoming bereavement.

The masculine “rough ways” is what Tony has been exposed to growing up with a specific discourse of masculinity and he does nothing to break out of this dominant



however a cardiac discourse. After lengthy fifteen pages depicting the male protagonist as highly sensitive and standing above hegemonic discourse of masculinity, Middleton lets the depiction collapse within seven lines. The author masters to pinpoint Tony on the brink of the direct conflict of the Man Alone and the Family Man. Tony, the perfect, responsible Family Man in domestic spheres together with Colleen turns out to be a simulation of the Man Alone when in the public sphere with his mate from work. Talking to his fellow Man Alone and certainly helped by the intoxicating features of alcohol during the manual work on the casket, Tony assumes the role of the Man Alone and distances himself from his dead child referring to it by a detached "*this one*" (MIDDLETON 2008: 90). Don, a true New Zealand *mate* to Tony, collects the father to give him a ride to the hospital and further to the graveyard. Cultural manual inhibits Don from going any further than being a good 'mate' and helping out his suffering friend-in-distress by giving him a ride in his car. There are no words of comfort exchanged, no words of sympathy expressed for the mourning father. Don incapable of expressing empathy engages in a chat about common technical work to avoid Tony's withdraw from dominant masculine discourse and penetration into inappropriate realms (where no man should have ever gone before):

[Don] was quiet but not at all mournful and looked at the casket with an appraising eye when Tony brought him into the living-room.  
 'Lovely stuff!' he approved, running his hand over the smooth matai.  
 'That's a bit of that line from down south, isn't it?' Tony said it was, and waited for Don to ask about the funeral and who the undertaker was, but the questions did not come. (MIDDLETON 2008: 90)

Don, here a magnificent specimen of New Zealand hegemonic masculinity, the man of the hour flourishes with his demeanour, avoiding emotional talk and completely blanking out Tony's mourning. Don might even believe to do Tony a favour by acting 'the man' according to script. The little coffin Tony has built for his son is falsely functionalised to serve as an initiator to talk shop, about the wood Tony used. The real function of the casket is blanked out by Don. Tony wishes Don to enquire about the funeral and give him a chance to talk about his sentiments upon

request, but in both men the will and chance to break with their assumption of masculinity is practically nonexistent.

After visiting his wife in hospital, Tony puts his dead baby boy in the little coffin and the two men drive off to the cemetery. Having revealed on the telephone that he has lost his first son too, Tony cautiously inquires about how Don experienced this trying situation:

‘And how do you feel about it now?’ Tony wanted to know. ‘Don’t you sometimes wonder what it would have grown into? What it would have been like?’ [...]

‘Well’, he said, wrinkling up his forehead. ‘I can hardly remember anything about it now. The wife was a bit weepy for a while but as soon as others started to come, she forgot all about it. Now that we’ve got four and the oldest girl’s fourteen, it doesn’t mean a thing.’ (MIDDLETON 2008: 92)

Tony so eager to share his pain and trying to understand his emotions is let down by Don’s performance of masculinised mourning. Don refuses sentimental talk (between men) by asserting that his memory is faded and immediately bringing his wife into the conversation – a safe ground upon which to talk about emotions. The children that followed allegedly erased her agony; and “it doesn’t mean a thing” to Don now. Similarly, he dispatches Tony’s agony by advising the mourning father to forget all about his first born, as he and “the Missus will have a couple of healthy young kids and you’ll have forgotten all about this bit of bad luck” (MIDDLETON 2008: 93). “This bit of bad luck” as a euphemism for the matter of a dead baby boy is a manifestation of purely masculine New Zealand lingo. It connotes the hegemonic, masculine way of referring and dealing with bereavement. To call a dead child “bad luck” and diminutivise it by a “bit” of it is clearly a way to unhealthily trivialise and talk down a matter that should be taken seriously.

Unfortunately, no improvement is at hand; the grave-digger’s vernacular and performance are worth being quoted at length:

'I've got a grave ready,' said the man, who was only in his early twenties. 'but it looks as though I'll have to widen it .... The usual casket for premature is much smaller than that,' he finished, nodding at the box on Tony's shoulder. [...]

'This your first child?' the young grave-digger asked over his shoulder. And when Tony admitted that it was, he said 'Tough luck, eh!' They came to a mound of fresh earth and the grave-digger stopped and pointed to the hole.

'The undertakers usually bury them in cardboard boxes,' he said. 'We'll have to open it out quite a bit ....'

He got down into the grave and cut back several inches of earth from the walls.

'Great soil here,' he said, 'but you ought to see it down there where the flash stones are ...! Every time we re-open one, we have to wear waders ....'

'The soil's nice and sandy up here though,' he said. 'Free-draining ....And look at the view!' [...]

The young grave-digger was getting out of the hole.

'I think that will do the trick,' he said, wiping off some sweat. (MIDDLETON 2008: 94)

Tony once more meets New Zealand hegemonic masculinity at peak performance. "'Tough luck, eh!'" is the linguistic expression of the expected vacuousness of emotional consternation. With his utterance, the grave-digger manifests New Zealand masculinity through the rehearsed act of absence of sympathy and compassion. Tony's decision to build a casket for his son and bury him himself hits on puzzlement yet again. "Usual" cultural script requires the absence of the father at the moment of inhumation and a cardboard box as a prop. Tony breaks the dominant discourse with his presence and a homemade wooden casket. The grave-digger goes on about soil texture and constitution. Tony, sadly immersed in a setting where the expression of emotion is not an accepted performance, does not sense the slightest defect in the grave-digger's demeanour of repressing emotional stir. The euphemistic belittlement "the trick" to refer to a baby boy's burial does not rankle with the childless father, since he is himself a part of the New Zealand lingo and ways of avoiding emotionally loaded content. Tony's helplessness to deal with his bereavement manifests further: Looking down on his son's grave, a "feeling of tremendous sadness grew inside him and he stood there, not knowing what to do, until he felt his eyes would burst from looking into the grave" (MIDDLETON 2008:

95). “Not knowing what to do” describes the absence of a ritual that Tony could perform, standing at his son’s grave. How he is supposed to bury his child is not answered by his culture. Tony and the grave-digger close up the grave and Tony heads back to his mate Don still waiting in the car:

‘All set, Tony?’ [Don] asked.

‘Yes, all set,’ Tony answered mechanically, getting in.

They drove away [...]. For a long while neither of them spoke, then, at last, Tony said, ‘I suppose you thought it was a strange thing for a man to do, taking charge of my own kid’s burial like that?’

Don nodded. ‘I did for a start,’ he said. ‘But while I was sitting here waiting for you I started thinking about it. After a bit, it didn’t seem such a bad idea – especially when you know how those undertakers charge! Anyway let’s leave it alone now, shall we? What we need is a drink!’ (MIDDLETON 2008: 96)

Don is disgracefully out of place with his assumptive remark about financial issues concerning a funeral and at the same time emphatically in place within New Zealand discourse of masculinity. The limited sources of expressing empathy their cultural setting provides Don with make him suggest intoxication as remedy to his mate’s grief. As Tony is inhibited in expressing and dealing with his mourning anyway, he does not object to Don’s plan. They enter the pub – a space that Tony has not frequented lately, because of his marriage to Colleen, as the story suggests: “Being married to Colleen, [Tony] had got out of the habit of going into bars” (MIDDLETON 2008: 96). Colleen as woman, wife and apparent exponent of the historical Cult of Domesticity has introduced Tony to the life of the Family Man.

Historically, James and Saville-Smith discuss the New Zealand pub as the “arena in which the tensions in male culture between the Family Man and the Man Alone emerged” (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 42). The Cult of Domesticity that held hands with the manifestation of the Family Man promoted a reduction in alcohol consumption by men. However, the exclusion of women in pubs and bars was “a custom” and secured the pub as a space associated with Man Alone (as without a woman) masculinity and mateship. Mateship is a realm in which masculinity is

celebrated and reaffirmed, often in combination with the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol is a key ingredient in male socialising and ritual since it risks losing one's physical power and control – abstract symbols of masculinity that are asserted especially in the space of the pub to impress other males and consolidate one's discursively hegemonic position. Often, ritual behaviour to predicate one's masculinity comprises sexual overtures to women (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 42; 50-1).

History is being repeated, imitated or reenacted in Middleton's story, since upon entering the pub, Don initiates the ritualised assertion of his masculinity: "'There's a couple of beauts,' [Don] said." (MIDDLETON 2008: 97) Middleton emphasises the sentiment of reiteration and rehearsedness of the course of events in the bar: he qualifies the characters' *doing* by adding the adverb "mechanically" (for instance pages 96, 97, 98). The performers' well rehearsed articulations, predictable expressions, set-up answers and even gesticulations render an impression of a complete repetition and joint performance of the characters involved. In this scene, Butlerian assertions about the disappearance of an agent behind the *doing* become most apparent: the *doing* is "mechanical", the script – hegemonic cultural discourse – demands a stylised repetition of acts, a performance. The performances are recognised and reacted to with appropriate continuative performances. The ping-pong of behavioural patterns creates one recognisable performative pattern. Tony's doing and saying is a manifestation of this pattern and it is perhaps because it is so repetitive and ritualised that he is able to perform against the background of his son's death. Alcohol plays its part in functioning as social lubricant and Tony is up and ready to perform as is expected:

'Here's to us!' said the dark one, smiling at Tony over the rim of her glass.

Tony tried to grin back, and swallowed the last of the double-header.

'What's up? You don't look too good,' said the dark girl.

'How do you mean?' he said, aware of her nice eyes and the touch of Maori in her skin and hair.

'Well, you look as though you had been to a funeral!' she said, pouting her lips.

'Oh don't take any notice of Tony,' Don chipped in hastily. 'His trouble is the same as mine .... Isn't that right, Mary?'

'I dunno what you mean,' she said.

'He's a married man with worries and responsibilities,' he said, slipping an arm around her waist.

'Is that it?' murmured the one called Jean, moving closer to him so that the others couldn't hear.

'That's right, Jean,' he said mechanically, swallowing the beer and getting ready to buy another round. (MIDDLETON 2008: 97-8)

The performance of smiling over the rim of a glass initiates Jean's approach to Tony, who at first inertly retorts the woman's flirting. Since sexual overtures to women are a way to achieve recognition and assertion of his masculinity, his engagement in ritualised or routinised behaviour is designed to rebuild and reaffirm his masculinity and position of power against the background of his loss in control through his son's death. It is in fact Don, through his suggestion to go to the pub and drink and then pick up beauties, who offers Tony to perform routinised demeanour to find again his space within the discourse of masculinity that was so shattered by the death of his baby boy and his inability to fully express his grief. This sad incident meant a threat to his masculinity since it made Tony act out of discourse and manufacture a casket and bury his son. This is how far society allows him to deviate from behavioural patterns and no further. Don attempts to give Tony back his identity and sense of security by providing the opportunity to reaffirm his masculinity through the repetition of stylised acting in the pub.

From the moment that his son's death shatters Tony's masculine identity by making him act out of identitarian assumptions (and in so causes puzzlement in the people he meets on the way), his cultural surrounding pushes him back into appropriate patterns of gender performance so that he may re-establish a masculinity that is recognisable within the given cultural script. Don promotes Tony's reestablishment through constantly drawing away attention from the moment of shattering of Tony's identity: his son's death. He talks about how crafty the casket

has been made, what a great idea it was to bury the child himself since the undertaker charge too much, and lastly, by taking Tony to the pub to help him find his performance again and relying that the maelstrom of dominant discourse will suck Tony in again to let him perform correspondingly. Tony's *mate* is perhaps not the unconditional friend one might wish to have in such a difficult situation but he supports him to find his way back hegemonic discourse of masculinity. The undertaker does the same in not letting the sad event take hold of the situation; indeed successfully so, since he succeeds in rendering the act of inhumation into a discussion of soil texture and the quality of the look-out. Tony quickly reaches the limits of acceptable deviation from the hegemonic cultural imagination of masculinity and is forced to take a step back. "[T]he moral imagination may transcend one's culturally conditioned attitudes, but only to a point" (JONES in MIDDLETON 2008: 15), says Jones in his introduction to Middleton's short story collection. The moral imagination in "A Married Man" is transcended by Tony's acting out of assumptions and by his surroundings accepting his short deviance, but importantly, only to a point. Tony re-establishes and affirms his Man Alone masculinity and his position within the dominant discourse "out of necessity rather than choice" (JONES in MIDDLETON 2008: 15), which can be seen as Middleton's major point of critique as to the plights of the New Zealand male of the time: There is no room for deviance. Tony may try to yaw but cultural constraints force him to stay the course.

As noted earlier, "A Married Man" stands on the brink of the shift from the concepts of the Man Alone to the Family Man and illustrates the tense negotiation of both masculinities in post-war New Zealand that still exist today. The Family Man, favoured by the state, means a threat to the Man Alone and his independence. The Family Man at home with Colleen, Tony is the Man Alone when in male company and masculine spaces, a negotiation which does not allow for a reciprocal interference with sentiments of the strictly separated spaces. He cannot carry his mourning into the space of the Man Alone, for that is where his masculinity is in need of

reestablishment through the deployment of stylised acts so that he may be again recognised as part of the dominant discourse.

### **1.3 HOW TO BECOME A NEW ZEALAND PIONEER: "ONE OF THE TITANS" (1961)**

„Wir spielen immer, wer es weiß, ist klug.“  
“We always act and he who knows is wise.” (*Paracelsus*; Arthur Schnitzler 1898)

Maurice Shadbolt called Renato Amato the “country’s most interesting and fastest developing younger writer” in the early 1960s (SHADBOLT 1964: 250). Being an immigrant to New Zealand and therefore perhaps one of the lesser known authors, there is the need to introduce him briefly; thankfully, Maurice Shadbolt provides an interesting introductory account of Amato’s life in the short story collection *The Full Circle of the Travelling Cuckoo* (cf. pp. 7-18).

Amato was born in Potenza, southern Italy in 1928. Rather late, in 1944, he tried to join the Italian Army out of “patriotism rather than ideology”, so Shadbolt asserts (in AMATO 1967: 8). He was disappointed twice: First, his father caught up with him and dragged him back home and then, after running away from home again, a sergeant in the recruiting office told him he was too young and should outwait the end of the war. However, he was picked up by the Germans and had to join the fascist *Brigate Nere*. Near the end of the war, a protective officer suggested he might leave the brigade and join the partisans as a spy. When the war was over, he had to witness his former comrades die in front of a partisan firing squad. In his story “Only a Matter of Grammar” he recalls the days of war and illustrates reversing roles of identities during World War II, victims and culprits. He became a member of the rebellious literary group called *the Rattlesnakes* and began to write short stories. A feeling of not belonging and unsettlement consolidated in him and he thought about immigrating to an English-speaking country. Imagining New Zealand to be a society highly advanced beyond the provincialism of Italy and old Europe, and hav-



ing broken with his family, he arrived in Auckland in 1954. His illusions were destroyed soon as he found himself being disapproved of, treated as curious, registered as an alien and insultingly called names, such as “Eye-tie” and “Wop”. He changed his name from Renato to Michael in order to avoid derogatory rhyming with his Christian name and only started to use it again when he began writing in English. He went from Auckland to the volcanic plateau in the centre of the North Island employed in the pioneer task of building a new town and living in a camp under the strict and malevolent eyes of the camp supervisors.<sup>2</sup> After a year of blue-collar work, he started working as a linen salesman. In 1958, he married Sheena McAdam, a Scottish waitress and student of Italian, who shared his immigrant uneasiness and passion for literature. Amato enrolled as a student at Victoria University in Wellington. After the birth of his son in 1959, he began to write again and surrendered the Italian language for good. In 1960 he became president of Victoria’s literary society; his work found its way into New Zealand literary journals and won the respect of other Wellington writers, among them James Baxter, Ian Cross and Les Cleveland. He died suddenly in 1964 at the age of thirty-five; a New Zealand obituary called him “A Mediterranean Man of New Zealand” (in AMATO 1967: 18).

“One of the Titans” is one of Amato’s short stories set in New Zealand and was posthumously published in 1967 by his wife after it had been first printed in *Mates* in 1961. It is a story of disappointed expectations of an immigrant and the tough reality of a subaltern masculinity (of Europe) within a dominant male working-class environment.

Guiliano Martine, an Italian immigrant to New Zealand, has arrived with hopes and outlooks of a better world. The story takes place in a New Zealand after World War II: Historical colonial push and pull dynamics between Europe and New Zealand

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<sup>2</sup> An experience he put down in writing in “One of the Titans”.

still applied, similarly to the socio-historical situation of nineteenth century: 'push' dynamics included European recent tragic history, economic instability and cataclysms in national identity politics and the subsequent uncertainty of a place in the world. 'Pull' factors were the New Zealand attraction that lay in the promises of wealth, prosperity, and restoration of a meaningful self.

In the story, Amato invokes 'pull' factors with which New Zealand promoted immigration: prospects promised general positive futurity such as "freedom", "Christian love" and "the best standards of living in the world" (AMATO 1967: 68-9). Additionally, pioneer and frontier life was advertised by evoking a mythology and therefore identitarian hopes around it: the pioneers would be "building a city" and "turning the wilderness into a land of milk and honey". Advertisement would also play with the imagery of success and advancement: they would be men "pushing back yet another frontier" and men "marching ahead in the name of progress" (AMATO 1967: 69). The mythology chiselled around the pioneer as a legendary identity certainly appealed to people who found the old world of Europe too war-torn to provide them with sentiments of a collective memory of past glories to give meaning and purpose to a stable present and prospects into a bright future. And most certainly, the imagery of the "land of milk and honey" would activate the imagination of a Mediterranean mind. He wanted to be part of the process of building a neo-Europe, a better Europe.

Michael King states that it was mostly single men who followed the call of coloured pamphlets into the countryside to become a pioneer "where they lived in camps and had little or no contact with the opposite sex" (KING 2003: 229). Around these men horded together grew a rich male culture and legendary elements. They led lives dominated by hard physical labour, evenings filled with yarns, and on the rare occasions they spent their money on alcohol, gambling and prostitutes. "They laid down many of the unspoken conventions of New Zealand male culture in the twentieth and twenty-first century" (KING 2003: 230). The primary identification of men

did not constitute itself between femininity and masculinity but between men only. Colonial life was not

marked by any great tension between male mateship on the one hand, and the social relations of mating and kinship on the other. In early colonial New Zealand, the nature of work itself, as well as the frequent sitting of production in the household, ensured that men had opportunities to socialize with other men and enabled mateship to be maintained in the workplace itself. (JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989: 37)

Even though James and Saville-Smith discuss early colonial life in a New Zealand of the nineteenth century, the situation in countryside New Zealand remains unchanged through to the late 1950s and 60s. The pioneering Man Alone masculinity persists tenaciously and still does so, perhaps anachronistically, in rural New Zealand today as we will see later in the stories by Owen Marshall. The discourse of pioneering masculinity was thus a male-only discourse during colonial times through to the twentieth century: The time men spend in each others' company provided room for identity negotiations and the establishment of dominant discourse that other would have to obey to lead a liveable life among the hegemonic masculinities. Since they were in the middle of nowhere without any authorities to cast an evil eye on them the Men Alone became associated with the qualities of independence, egalitarianism and loyalty (to each other). With these promises in mind and this premise, Martine arrived in New Zealand and found himself in a little populated area in "the middle of nowhere", "the only Eye-tie" (AMATO 1967: 69, 68) among swearing, rude and bullying working males.

The representation of New Zealand pioneering Man Alone masculinity in this story is a shallow attempt and does not reach psychological abysses. The collectivity of workers is subsumed in an itemisation of anaphoric style: "Johnnies and Chrises and Tommies" (AMATO 1967: 70), and hyphenated compounds denoting their function in the working machinery: "ditch-diggers and concrete-shovellers and timber-carriers and steel-benders and nail-pushers" (AMATO 1967: 67). The workers re-

main nameless and are presented in unflattering light of swearing drunkards, singing, talking about women, grumpy and pugnacious.

The character of Guiliano Martine pools his fellow workers to a bunch of despicable bullies and renders himself the subaltern amongst them. He is very much aware of his position and deliberately stands out. He is the only worker wearing gloves, thus rendering himself “the Wop who doesn’t want to get his hands dirty” (AMATO 1967: 70). Since pioneer masculinity in New Zealand celebrates itself as egalitarian, ‘tall poppies’ like Martine who seem to think of themselves as someone better and above will be cut down by bullying: “‘Found the ones you lost?’ It was a joke. The boys kept throwing his gloves away, and the Wop kept buying a new pair without saying a word” (AMATO 1967: 70).

Martine as an outsider of the hegemonic discourse pools the workers together and as a reader we do not see hierarchies within this discourse. “One of the Titans” is not a story that illustrates identity processes within the New Zealand frontier society but it renders a manual of how to be a New Zealand pioneering Man Alone masculinity. It emphasises the necessary acts, the doing that lets a pioneering Man Alone be recognised as such. In doing so, Amato’s creation of the character of Martine is exemplary in his reflexivity and astuteness on the performativity of identity.

By not performing the script of the hegemonic model of masculinity, Martine becomes the “funny bird” (AMATO 1967: 69) and seemingly subordinate (but rather subaltern) masculinity. To the fellow workers he is recognised as strange and subordinate because of his rejection to perform according to a specific dominant identity, which presents a threat to an egalitarian system that emphasises sameness and does not celebrate diversity. In postcolonial terminology, he becomes the subaltern masculinity within a hegemonic discourse by creating resistance in not performing according to the hegemonic imagination. He does not joke around with the

other workers, does not get drunk, does not fight, does not talk about women, does not sing and does not laugh. By his resistance to engage in these stylised acts, he makes it impossible for the other workers to be recognised as fellow masculinity. He is not the norm because he does not *do* the culturally normative.

Martine reflects on the performativity of his fellow worker's identities and how easy it would be for him to perform correspondingly, but it would not feel true to him. It would not be his true self but a role he would take on, merely for political reasons:

He could have cursed [...], following a pattern he knew by heart by now; he could have said, 'Who f — wants to f — go in that f — bomb of yours?' but, somehow, it would have been like putting a mere facade on an empty lot and calling it a complete building. The words would have been there, but the spirit behind them – that sort of automatic conviction that was in the voices of the Johnnies and Chrises and Tommies around him – to give them meaning and a reason to be, would have been missing. (AMATO 1967: 70)

Martine muses that it is the fellow workers' *doing*, their stylised repetition of acts (literally: "a pattern" and "automatic conviction") that give them "meaning and reason to be". This is close to a literal definition of performance and the performativity of identity. Martine ponders that by imitating these acts he could be one of them, even though it would only be a conscious mimicry to compete with hegemonic models. He would put on a "facade", a camouflage or active mimicry with high recognition value to the others as part of the *style*, the norm, but the camouflage would not provide him with a true identity. It would all be a lie even though the possibility to engage in mimicry bestows Martine with the power of choice. Richard Schechner in his intercultural studies on performances writes that "the only difference between 'ordinary behaviour' and 'acting' is one of reflexivity: professional actors are aware that they are acting" (SCHECHNER 1990: 30). Martine may thus be identified as an actor, a performer for he is aware and conscious of the performativity of the manifestation of a pioneering masculinity and could thus easily

copy his performance and imitate his doing. The pioneering masculinity is a script that Martine has read and could restage.

Martine realises that although the country itself cannot live up to its promises, it is really his own imagination that created those promises: “perhaps it was like translating a country and its people into a theoretical concept in his own imagination. That, too, was lies” (AMATO 1967: 71). After his loss of hope in Europe, Martine wanted New Zealand to be the country of milk and honey. He hoped that New Zealand and his engagement in pioneering work would award him with a desired identity. But he had to realise that the men *doing, acting* the pioneers do not do it for some higher ideology but for the money; and their doing that makes them recognisable as New Zealand pioneers is in no way nearly as heroic as the legendary titans of Greek mythology. They were the children of Gaia and Uranus, earth and sky, and reigned during the golden ages forming the world around them; they were the makers of the land of milk and honey. Pamphlets promised that New Zealand pioneering men were doing the same, but the New Zealand version looks rather bleak in light of the characteristics that form the dominant discourse of pioneering masculinities.

Martine feels he could easily belong to this hegemonic manifestation of masculine identity if only he wanted to. He has the script of how to *do* and convey the hegemonic manifestation of a New Zealand pioneering Man Alone; he knows how to become like them:

Guiliano kept walking [...] [a]way from nowhere to go nowhere else. Which, he thought, would maybe make him something like the other fellows on the job. [...] He would then be one of them: not with them, but *like* them. One of the ‘builders of a country’, an outstanding specimen, drunken and broke, run-down and grumpy, hating everything and fighting everybody.  
And then, his loneliness would end.

One of the pioneers, one of the titans, talking and moving and shouting and swearing, without knowing what whom he was doing it for. For the country, or himself, or maybe the free world. [...] Who else could he, and all the others, do it for? Or what else? The legend? Of course, the legend of men who are giants and roam the countryside and master nature; the legend of lands that flow with milk and honey.

And it was good to feel that he himself, by doing that, by swearing and sweating and smelling and going, might just make it and get into the legend. (AMATO 1967: 71-2)

Martine savours the idea of himself becoming part of the legend of the pioneers. He is conscious of the performances to become one of the titans; New Zealand pioneering identity, as all identities, is performative. And the required stylised repetition of acts is easily deployed; however, an approximation of himself to the pioneering Man Alone would imply a transgression of his own convictions. The choice, though, gives Martine subversive power. For the moment, Martine has chosen *not* to make himself recognisable to and as the New Zealand pioneering Man Alone by imitation and mimicry; he chooses not to be a mere actor or performer of a preset pattern of actions.

“One of the Titans” renders a highly descriptive narration of stereotyped Kiwi working-class males (Men Alone) – it almost offers a recipe of how to perform successfully what will then be recognised as the said identity. Its effectiveness lies in the narrator’s voice, the Other voice. Highly analytical and refined in the act of observation, the Other voice lays bare the simplicity and single-layeredness of the actions that define masculinity in the story’s working-class, countryside New Zealand. Martine’s voice exposes that these actions are but behavioural patterns that may be repeated over and over again. “One of the Titans” provides an acting recipe for a specific identity, yet reveals the choice an individual has. The narrator’s awareness of the constructedness of the acts, and his decision not to become a performer renders this New Zealand short story unique among its kind.

#### **1.4 FOREVER THE MAN ALONE: "HEATING THE WORLD" (1991)**

I'm just another struggling male writer... (MARSHALL: Interview March 2009)

One of New Zealand's most loved and admired, and certainly one of the most productive authors is Owen Marshall. In 2008, Vincent O'Sullivan edited a collection of some sixty stories by Marshall and still laments his predicament in selecting the lot out of such enormous a corpus. O'Sullivan places Marshall in the context with the male realist tradition of New Zealand:

What reading brings home to you is that 'Marshall country' is a distinctive and compelling place, pretty much like the one we live in day by day, and yet by no means a mere 'copy'. [...] We are shown more than we usually see in characters who look like us, talk like us, at our troubled best and our recognisable worst. [...] More than any other of our writers, he has taken out an imaginative franchise on a particular kind of New Zealand [...] life, much as there is a David Malouf Queensland, or a Tim Winton Western Australia. His world by and large may be one we are familiar with. (in MARSHALL 2008: 9-10)

O'Sullivan emphasises Marshall's stories' prominent position within the country's masculinist tradition. Marshall's stories create a specific kind of New Zealand. O'Sullivan establishes Marshall's literary world as "part of that clear-eyed, unsentimental inheritance to call shit for what it is." (in MARSHALL 2008: 15) Marshall says about his own work in my interview:

Some of the commentators analysed my early writing as *masculinist*. To some extent it was true. I could see why that was. I have no sisters of my own age, much younger; I went to a boys single sex boys' school, I taught at a single sex boys school, I was in the army doing national service with just blokes, I played a lot of sport almost entirely with men. So for quite a long time, it took me until I was married, my experience was largely with men. That informed my writing. (Interview March 2009)



Marshall highlights that it was the exclusively male environment in which he was born that made his writing to be recognised as masculinist and as a depiction of very specifically male microcosms of New Zealand society. Many of his stories tell of young boys growing up in a male-only environment and their struggling. Marshall goes on analysing:

Art comes out of an individual consciousness which in turn is affected by background and experiences and conventions. What comes out as art is often unconsciously if not consciously reflecting the lifestyle and the cultural hour. When I was writing my earlier stories I didn't think these are masculinist. Never occurred to me. I wrote as I could write and as I wanted to write and as it seemed to me I should write and it reflected my background to being pretty much in a male dominated group of society. (Interview March 2009)

It is indicative that at the time he was writing certain stories, Marshall was not aware they were "masculinist". His writing is pervaded by rural masculinities, and their tenacious continuity from early colonial days until nowadays. The naturalisation of masculinity, of a certain type of masculinity, made social discrepancies and hierarchies invisible. In the interview he expresses having attempted to incorporate more the female perspective on things; he hopes his writing is an ongoing process.

Most of Marshall's stories are sketches of characters and moments in time rather than plot-driven stories. The majority of Marshall's male characters are set in masculine spaces and operate in opposition to other masculinities (very much like "The Big Game" and "One of the Titans"). Hardly ever is there a masculinity that is constructed in opposition to femininity. Many of Marshall's masculinities struggle with small town, unforgiving environments and more than one of them die at the end of their stories, either by their own hands or inflicted by their surrounding.

“Heating the World”, originally published in 1991 in *Landfall*, provides us with an entertaining construction of a New Zealand Man Alone masculinity, in form of Tucker Locke, on the dangerous brink to the Family Man masculinity. Tucker’s masculinity is constructed in opposition to the femininity that his wife and her daughters bring into his house and presents thus one of the few occasions where masculinity is truly threatened by femininity. In the end he might be recognised as Family Man masculinity, but this serves as a mere camouflage to be able to receive both the comforts of a female in the house and the independence of the Man Alone in strictly separated spaces. This is also the story that Owen Marshall has chosen for his part in the collection *Authors’ Choice*, and he says about it:

The story has a gloss of satirical humour, but it is a mild satire, and sympathetic humour, I hope. Sophistication may be lacking in country and small-town Kiwis, but many of them make shrewd assessments of their fellow citizens whether from cities or farms, and most of them in my experience have a sense of fair play and a basic good will. I laugh at these characters, but also with them. (MARSHALL 2001: 167)

Marshall’s main male protagonist, Tucker Locke is a middle-aged bachelor farmer in rural New Zealand and conveys in his simplistic, practical, DIY, single-household lifestyle qualities of the Man Alone masculinity.

Tucker was one of a group of bachelor farmers so typical of the New Zealand heartland that they form a sub-species of the population. [...] The sub-species of rural bachelordom is perpetually renewed, of course, by the very process of attrition which reduces its contemporary generation. By the time he was forty even Tucker had become aware that he was no longer typical among his acquaintances, and that there were deficiencies in a comparative sense. (MARSHALL 2008: 281-2)

The manifestation of the Man Alone masculinity enjoys great popularity in rural New Zealand so that Marshall even calls it a “sub-species” of the population. The future and perseverance of the ‘type’, and naturally an heir of the farm, is provided by the same institution that also reduces the present generation: marriage and reproduction. The wish for continuity presents a dilemma to the independent Man

Alone: in order to reproduce he has to take on qualities of the Family Man. Tucker who is a forty-two-year-old Man Alone masculinity is one of the last unmarried men in his circle of friends. The Family Man therefore is the hegemonic manifestation of masculinity since it is the most desired version. The Man Alone manifestation is depicted as an obsolete masculinity. With more and more mates getting married, Tucker starts to weigh his independence against the comforts that the presence of a female entails: "At the tables of his married friends he developed a taste for lasagne and apple strudel [...] and the sight of children forced him to consider the fact that his farm had no heir" (MARSHALL 2008: 282). Upscale culinary delights and the promise of heirs are stated as the primary motivation for Tucker to "take the plunge" and engage in so-called "display which indicated that he was willing as well as eligible" (MARSHALL 2008: 282). The ritual of display or mate, in layman's terms 'looking for a wife', involves certain strategies that are new to the bachelor: Tucker is visible in spaces you would not expect a Man Alone, he wears a tie, and starts to attend mixed gender events. Tucker deliberately engages in activities that are untypical of a Man Alone in order to convey his 'availability' as a Family Man; he starts to compromise and negotiate his lifestyle. He leaves the male-only spaces of farm, hotel bar, rugby match, gun-club, and gambling, as it is apparent to him that he might not find a wife there. He acts availability and eligibility through his presence in mixed gender spaces and institutions in 'appropriate' adjustment (a tie). He is a Man Alone in disguise to signal his willingness to change his current identity and by marrying attempt to take on another one.

The entire story is set in male-only space and institutions, so we never in fact meet Tucker's wife "with good legs" (MARSHALL 2008: 281) and her three daughters who remain in the female domestic space of the farmhouse. We only hear about them and their impact through Tucker's narrations during his night-out's with his mate Neville O'Doone who had been married a little longer and therefore serves as a counsel to the newly wed. "He felt a little superior: the sort of superiority you feel when up to your waist in quicksand, but observing someone else in up to his neck"

(MARSHALL 2008: 283). Neville's abdication of Man Alone bachelordom is equally menacing since femininity brings about the assumption of characteristics of the Family Man, the less 'manly' manifestation.

The two men meet on a regular basis at exclusively male events and in exclusively male spaces where Tucker seizes the opportunity to express his astonishment about female behaviour: He is bewildered by the excessive purchase and usage of hygiene and beauty products of his newly acquired females: "It's almost liquid stuff they buy,' said Tucker sadly. 'It runs away. You've no idea. It just runs away down the plughole" (MARSHALL 2008: 293).

Elusive soaps prove incompatible with Tucker's simple solidity of a New Zealand rural bachelor life he took to its extremes when he was still unmarried: "Neville could recall Tucker's bathroom before his marriage: one block of yellow soap on which it was easier to work up a sweat than a lather and with dirt settled into its seams as it weathered so that it was grained like a metamorphic rock" (MARSHALL 2008: 283). The story's portrayal of the usage of soap succeeds in turning the 'soap-event' into a performance: Tucker processes the soap so that it resembles a stone, solid and from the bosom of New Zealand just as Tucker himself. Femininity is portrayed in opposition with elusiveness and evanescence: the liquidity of the soap used by his wife and daughters stands in stark contrast to Tucker's solid soap. Therefore, Tucker and his soap manifest an identity bound to the land, the earth from which they stem. Tucker's Man Alone masculinity is the durable monolith that becomes threatened and shattered by a femininity that is characterised by ephemerality and detachment from ground and soil. Femininity is not of Tucker's world, so to speak. Having deliberately exposed himself to the threat of femininity though Tucker has no choice but to adjust his performances that made him recognisable as a solid New Zealand Man Alone by letting in acts associated with femininity.

Neville and Tucker meet at the gun-club and the newly wed complains about his clothes wearing out faster than before: “I reckon my stuff is getting worn away in the washing machine,’ said Tucker guardedly. ‘Women love to get the clothes from my back.’ ‘Do they indeed, you old dog.’ ‘I mean for washing’” (MARSHALL 2008: 283). The deployment of clothes as a performance illustrates persistence on Tucker’s side versus ephemerality as a characteristic performance that denotes inherent of femininity. “Tucker had been accustomed to maintain three pairs of underpants – one to wear, one to wash and one to change into. He couldn’t comprehend the necessity of any other regime” (MARSHALL 2008: 284). Since he had acquired traits associated with femininity in order to become a Family Man, his wardrobe has expanded. He is hardly recognisable as ‘himself’ anymore: “For twenty years Neville had identified Tucker off his own property by his blue checked sportsjacket, but he was becoming more difficult to spot since marriage, as his colouration varied” (MARSHALL 2008: 284). Tucker has been recognisable to his environment by his sportsjacket that had become a sort of identity marker or trade mark. As his wardrobe is varying, identification has become difficult. Tucker has replaced consistency with variation. He even has two suits now although he doesn’t see “that people are going to die regularly enough for [him] to need to alternate them” (MARSHALL 2008: 284). Being a farmer with consistent appropriate clothing, Tucker never had use for a suit except for occasions such as funerals and other societal spectacles. His wife attempts indeed to make a different ‘man’ out of him.

During the next occasion, a boys’ night out in a hotel bar (“the only one in town that hadn’t put in a barbecue and outdoor seating” (MARSHALL 2008: 285)), Tucker laments the fact that his girls buy fruit:

‘There’s bought fruit, see.’ His tone was one of shocked disclosure. Fruit was nature’s bounty, something that arose naturally from one’s land without great attention, and with no mercenary aspects. Ah, but since his marriage, Tucker had been introduced to mandarins and melons,

pawpaws and peppers, passion fruit, oranges and kiwi fruit. [...] 'We have bananas often in a bowl together with oranges and pears,' Tucker was half defiant, half distraught, convinced that such hubris would bring his ruin. 'This morning I looked at the ticket on one of the bananas. They each have their own ticket, you know. It had come from Ecuador. Ec-u-a-dor!' (MARSHALL 2008: 285)

Before femininity intruded his bachelordom, Tucker had indulged in growing apples and had always had wrinkled apples in his pockets and his truck. Now, he has been introduced to imported, exotic fruit that unfortunately gets thrown away. "The concept of produce purchased from the ends of the earth, and then thrown out, was arsenic to Tucker's peace of mind" (MARSHALL 2008: 286). New Zealand masculinity, moulded from her own soil, meets New Zealand as part of a global market. Yet again, Tucker as New Zealand Man Alone masculinity and defender of domestic produce (100% pure New Zealand, so to speak) stands for sustainability whereas femininity through her choice of fruit and the fact it goes bad quickly and has to get disposed of represents transience and fugacity.

Still not the end of all things, Tucker seizes the way home from a rugby match to express his disappointment about their new duvets. "All those blankets that had provided sensible warmth for generations of Lockes, now stored with good wear still in them, and duvets purchased in their bedstead" (MARSHALL 2008: 288). The thought of the blankets, in their loyal support of his ancestors' warmth, causes nostalgic woefulness. For generations, the blankets had provided decorous service to the Lockes and they have been maliciously preplaced by modern, duvets with no history or personal attachment whatsoever. To use the blankets his forefathers have been sleeping in gives Tucker the feeling of belonging within a specifically New Zealand familial heritage. The extravagance of duvets does not conform to his identity as a Man Alone, for a Man Alone does not *use* duvets, he covers himself in blankets, ideally 'honest' blankets that have done their service to prior generations.

Lastly, during a night of gambling in chilly July, Tucker speaks of having had to abandon the house cow and get used to alternative milks:

Red tops, blue tops, green tops, banded tops, low fat, non-lipid, reduced cholesterol, anti-coagulate, mineral free. Tucker claimed he could see a logical trend in it all: the more things were removed from the milk the more the product cost. 'You know,' he said to Neville, 'soon we'll pay the highest price of the lot for milk with everything extracted – and it'll be water.'

'It's all progress, I suppose,' said Neville, but he could remember the cream jug of his boyhood in which the spoon would stand upright. (MARSHALL 2008: 288-9)

The popularity of alternative milks with his wife and daughters stands in contrast to Tucker's tradition of having a cow and his nostalgic connotation of *real* milk versus watery derivatives of modernity. Femininity renders change and progress as opposed to the nostalgia of the 'good days' of rural masculine simplicity.

An unmarried Tucker acted in many ways to fit into the landscape and be of this land. He made himself invisible and a part of the countryside through his wardrobe stiff with the many generations that had worn it and coloured so in order to blend in completely. He drank milk directly from the cow's delivery, grew apples and hid them in pockets and glove compartments. He used blankets that had been in his family for generations and soap that would resemble a rock. Tucker manifests his identity through the assembling of aspects of solidity and persistence and a tight bond to the earth and soil. His whole world seemed to be organised around his concept of masculinity.

His marriage now necessarily entails a shattering of his concept and his male-only spaces. The domestic space of his farmhouse that was formerly a male space is now becoming a female space. Tucker's transgression from a Man Alone to a Family Man works via the reinterpretation of the domestic space. The marriage and the subsequent inevitable reinterpretation of one of his major masculine realms cause

the shattering of his identity, his self. The stylised acts Tucker engaged in are replaced by different stylised acts forced upon him by the intrusion of femininity and his reinterpretation (of himself) as a Family Man. Acts of solidity and sustainability such as the using of a stone-resembling soap, the using of old blankets, the growing of apples, the deliberate wearing of landscape-reminiscent, 'indestructible' clothing are replaced by acts of ephemerality and fugacity, such as the using of liquid soaps, the repetitive purchase of clothes in fetching colours, the buying and throwing away of exotic fruit, the supplanting of the old blankets by new duvets and the consumption of milk approximating water.

Now, the acts of ephemerality are entirely constructed against the concept of New Zealand rural Man Alone masculinity. Further, they are associated with femininity in this story since Tucker is the point of reference and laments about the deviant Other in the form of his wife and his daughters. Tucker's decision to marry forces him to reinterpret his Man Alone identity; he is no longer alone. In order to assume the chosen identity of the Family Man he acquires traits of femininity; he supplants his acts of Man Alone masculinity with acts of femininity in order to negotiate the concept of the Family Man. Tucker's aversion to assume the concept of the Family Man is comprehensible in light of his necessary acquisition of acts of femininity and simultaneous loss of aspects of masculinity that have been found sensible, apparently for generations. Why Tucker gets married even though the bond brings about many a comfortable change in his routine may be traced back to society's naturalised pressure to produce an heir and, as we have heard several times earlier, the state's promotion of the Family Man as a desirable condition.

It is the different ways of *doing* things that illustrate the clashing of gender discourse in "Heating the World". Both, New Zealand masculinity and (a more generally malevolent) femininity are both performative and it is in their varying performances that they become identities. Tucker reveals that it is not the fact that his girls *are* different that appals him but the fact that they *do* things differently that



causes puzzlement. That acts of femininity are associated with ephemerality and acts of masculinity with persistence and stability – associations which are entirely Owen Marshall's, illustrative of a gender discourse that still exists. Marshall's short story has a feel of historicity and anachronism even though it was only published in 1991. Lawrence Jones recalls in my interview: "Owen Marshall said to me once, when people say that some of his stories sound as if it's New Zealand of forty years ago, he said, maybe it's only forty miles away from the city" (Interview March 2009). This proves the following: the figure of the Man Alone that appears historical and anachronistic in the twenty-first century is still a highly topical one in Marshall's rural New Zealand.

### ***1.5 'TRADITIONAL' MĀORI PATRIARCHY: "ASK THE POSTS OF THE HOUSE" (2007)***

Maori hypermasculinity was privileged in New Zealand.  
(HOKOWHITU 2007: 17)

A handful of scholars have focused their research interest on Māori masculinities, two of them standing out in their endeavours: Ty Kāwika Tengan from the University of Hawai'i who has mainly done work on Indigenous Pacific masculinities especially in reference to Hawai'i, and Brendan Hokowhitu of Ngāti Pūkenga at the University of Otago, who specialises in the construction of Māori masculinities in popular discourse, sport and media.

Not much is known of gender relations prior to European settlement and whether categories such as femininity and masculinity ever existed. What has been discussed, though, is today's manifestation of Māori masculinities that tend to defy any categorisation as either Polynesian or Western. Hokowhitu, for example, treats them as 'hybrid' manifestations, especially when it comes to depictions of what he calls 'traditional' Māori patriarchy (cf. HOKOWHITU 2007: 114). Hokowhitu does not

abandon the idea that patriarchy existed in pre-colonial times but reasons that it was organised differently from the model that is prevalent in the colonial construction. Prior to colonisation, patriarchy was constructed according to tribal epistemologies, for example notions of whakapapa (genealogy) and mana (power/prestige/respect) (cf. HOKOWHITU 2007: 114). Hybrid Māori patriarchy that is now considered 'traditional' is formed by the concept of the noble savage mingled with British imperial patriarchal values. The colonial system afforded Māori men with power *because* they were men, and since pestering questions of cultural survival arose, assimilating systematic traits of the invaders served as political strategy to level with them (cf. HOKOWHITU 2007: 118-9). Therefore, what we perceive as 'traditional' Māori masculinity or patriarchy is a consequence of colonial processes and represents nothing truly 'traditionally' pre-settler New Zealand Polynesian. The 'Māori' itself is a colonial invention as it only came into being through the contact with Europeans. Continuity between Māori and patriarchy and notions of tradition is authenticated through narratives. One such narrative is "Ask the Posts of the House" by Witi Ihimaera.

Witi Ihimaera (born 1944 of Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, with close affiliations to Tuhoe, Te Whanau-a-Apanui, Ngati Kahungunu, and Ngati Tamanuhiri, and links to Rongowhakaata, Ngati Porou, and Te Whakatohea) is without doubt the most renowned and acclaimed male Māori author of his time. He was the first Māori writer to publish a short story collection in 1972, called *Pounamu, Pounamu*, and a novel in 1973, *Tangi*. His most famous novel *The Whale Rider* in which a Māori girl forces her way into succession allegedly reserved for boys was published in 1987 and made into a successful and disputed New Zealand film in 2002. Carl Stead mentioned that New Zealand fiction by and about Māori was dominated by a "romantic view of whānau [extended family] and iwi [tribe]" (in MARSHALL 2001: 135). Far-off is this assumption in regard to Ihimaera's short stories. There might be those that draw on a sentimental imagination of Māori tribal discourses, but Ihimaera has much more to offer than woeful nostalgia.

In *The Whale Rider*, Ihimaera stresses what finds expression in many other writings of his: He emphasises the importance of the past, whakapapa and mana for the formation of present day Māori cultural identity; and he invents characters that challenge old-established and sometimes destructively dysfunctional protocols that are in desperate need of rethinking and “modernisation”. The first endeavour he does very obviously: “Here is your culture, appreciate it!” (JONES: Interview March 2009) is how Lawrence Jones circumscribes the declaration of Ihimaera’s didactic writing. The second undertaking is a very complex attempt to exhibit flaws and dangerously destructive patterns in some long-established traditions and protocols that are challenged.

Māori/Pākehā-relations play a vital role in his more political writing: “Ihimaera has given a powerful dramatization of the problems facing the new Maori generation in its attempt to find a relation between two worlds with ostensibly opposed sets of values” (Fox 1980: 88). Some of Ihimaera’s ‘powerfully dramatic’ stories express the disappointment about the belief that Māori/Pākehā-differences are still insuperable, that they have to be solved with fists, and that the world will never change no matter how hard they try. An approximation to the Pākehā world seems to involve “an alienation from the old Maori world of the whanau” (Fox 1980: 88). Gridlocked assumptions on both sides clash violently. Even so, Ihimaera also offers stories in reconciliatory tone, especially in his later writing. The solution seems to be the unifying power of aroha/love. One of his most optimistic stories, “The Wedding”, tells of a Pākehā-Māori intercultural couple and their struggle with one another’s parents-in-law and the juggling of both cultural assumptions as to their wedding ceremony with highly entertaining effect. It seems, after all, love is the key to the future universal to both worlds. Wevers asserts that in general, “Māori writers tend to stress the orality of the written, the function of language as a medium for voice rather than for the kind of abstract or linguistic play that characterizes language in [...] post-modern stories” (1991: 251). This is true for most of

Ihimaera's stories; "Ask the Posts of the House" renders a particularly powerful narrative voice.

"Ask the Posts of the House" first published in 2007 is one of Ihimaera's most powerful narrations of novella length. To cut the long plot short, it tells of a Māori godlike patriarch committing incest with his own daughter consensually with his whānau. His nephew, crippled by nature but intellectually superior, repeatedly challenges his uncle and in the end proves the more powerful masculinity. The story is told through the reflective and judgemental eyes of said nephew, Isaac Tairawhiti Jnr., and is chaptered in seven short parts that illustrate the protagonist's present and past events. The reader learns only gradually about the horrific incidents of the past through flashbacks that the protagonist willingly narrates.

Isaac is on his flight back home to New Zealand from business negotiations in Bangkok. He lets us know immediately that he is a successful Māori business man (what Connell might refer to as "transnational business masculinity" (cf. CONNELL 1998)): "Brown faces like mine are no longer a rarity in business class" (IHIMAERA 2007: 32). Isaac alludes to the wilful assimilation of Māori into the Pākehā world and global commerce to get their share of power and success defined in Western terminology. The appropriation of their lands, the removal of cultural and economic treasures, and the denial of their rangatiratanga (self-determination) has forced Māori to rethink their concept of mana and look for it in the ranks of the colonisers. Since New Zealand has more and more become part of a globalised world, Māori have started to align their mana in Western concepts: mana comes with education, economic independence, eloquence in English, property, and money and all its cultural collocations. Isaac mentions: "I like hiring and firing people as it gives me a great sense of power, something I've inherited from my warlike ancestors" (IHIMAERA 2007: 32). The logic is a bit evasive: Isaac's arbitrament over people's economic destiny churns a feeling of potency and power that he then equals with the Māori concept of mana. Now, Māori notions of mana in-

deed have to do with inheritance and ancestry whereas Western economic authority does not demand such continuity. Also, the invention of “warlike ancestors” is of course a colonial one and not ‘traditionally’ Māori. Be that as it may, one must not wonder why he establishes illogical continuity to (Westernly imagined) Māori ancestry to justify his craving for power in the Western understanding: the fact that he does, lets his character appear in a specific light that is loaded with appetite for power.

We hear that the reason for Isaac’s reluctance to return home is some burdensome past event that he as head of the extended whānau has to deal with. Isaac expresses how surprising his promotion was, considering his childhood as an outcast with a clubfoot. He particularly stresses that it was the urgency of money that made him head, and how easily he could fix the financial strains being a successful business man. It is the other problems do to with “blood, history, whakapapa” (IHIMAERA 2007: 34) that cudgels his brain.

In a long flashback, Isaac tells of his childhood being the whānau’s pariah. Much to the disappointment of his parents, he was born with a clubfoot:

My unsuspecting parents were shocked, especially my father, who was a highly regarded Maori sportsman in tennis, rugby and wrestling. As for my mother, Rewa, she blamed herself – and hey, so did my Dad – but she loved me unconditionally and did her best. In the old days of Polynesia, she would probably have taken me to a high cliff overlooking the sea and thrown me into it. [...] I am told that Isaac Senior tried his best to bond with me when I was growing up, but the sight of his first male child stumping along on his ankles, crying ‘Daddy, daddy daddee’, did not endear me to him. [...] The look of disgust in his eyes made it plain that I had no part in his life’s plans. I didn’t blame him: to be blighted with a damaged child must have seemed grossly unfair. I would never be the sportsman son to kick a football around with and he would never be able to stand on the spectator line watching me as I scored a try. [...] I was like some subhuman being, half man half animal, with a cloven foot. (IHIMAERA 2007: 37-9)

In this long passage, Isaac makes several points:

His physical deformity and his subsequent athletic inabilities are the cause of much dismay, especially because his father was an apt sportsman. Being born into a world that cherishes bodily deployment as performance of masculinity the honours so much physical strength as manifestation of hegemonic masculinity, visually ‘deformed’ Isaac becomes the runt of his father’s loins. That his mother would have thrown him off the cliffs into the ocean, had he been born in ancient Polynesia is of course a rhetorical exaggeration. Although infanticide was common in Polynesian cultures according to missionaries’ reports (cf. OLIVER 2002), it is highly unlikely that infanticide would have affected a male first born. (Perhaps Ihimaera tries to establish a connection to ancient war prone Sparta and their infamous disposal of weakly neonates?) Isaac’s father is “disgusted” by his son – the expression alluding to Isaac’s grotesque body in contrast to the ‘classical’ athletic body (‘classical’ being the most desired reality – the hegemonic body). Even worse, the son himself forgives the father for not acknowledging him as a true son. Physical fitness (fit for specific sports, that is) and the employment of the able body in sportive activities are signifiers of masculinity in this society.

As mentioned in the introduction, the dominant ideal of rugby football is important in Māori context since together with World War I and II, rugby provided the opportunity and space where Māori men could achieve power/mana alongside Pākehā men. Participating in strategies of the colonisers to acquire power serves as political means to align with them. Since rugby football was a stage reserved for the performance of muscular masculinity and not femininity, the discourse incorporates hegemonic gender as well as patriarchal aspects.

With sportive capability and performance having such a centrality in the formation of hegemonic masculinity in his world, Isaac is excluded from the arena of able-

bodied manliness from early childhood on. He does not even have access to a hegemonic manifestation of 'boyhood' since he cannot play ball with his father; a successful adult masculinity or Māori patriarchy seem completely out of reach. During these times of disappreciation by his family and whānau, the healthy cousins making fun of Isaac "down at the marae" (IHIMAERA 2007: 39), the main meeting space for his whānau rendering the space exclusive for the able-bodied, his cousin Georgina is his protector. She is the daughter of Isaac's Uncle Aaron, his father's brother, and head of the extended whānau. She is a "tomboy" (IHIMAERA 2007: 39) and beats the bantering kids bloody. One incident Isaac remembers in sentimentality is a game of baseball: Georgina carries Isaac to third base on her back before she decides to tie their inner legs together so they can run as one three-legged entity. Georgina lends Isaac the wholesomeness of her body, becomes his ersatz-asset of masculinity. It might be a bit far-fetched to impute on Georgina's performance a possible manifestation of female masculinity, but apparently it is her female body that enacts Isaac's deformed body to perform masculinity in the form of sportive activity: Tied together, metamorphosing into a three-legged animalistic hybrid entity they act physical efficiency which is acknowledged as masculine feature. Isaac transforms through the in-corporation of a female body from a subhuman into a three-legged superhuman being which through its abilities performs hegemonic ideals of masculinity. Georgina's female body enables his masculinity. This shows how easily hegemonic models may be subverted if they are constructed upon profanities such as physical fitness and the false sense of security that a naturalisation of the concept grants the able. The experience influences Isaac's life in so far as he starts to look out for alternative ways to subvert hegemonic rules of masculinity in his whānau. He finds the solution in education and embraces his temporary role of subordination:

I was already so different from them, bookish and serious [...]. Already an outsider by dint of my clubfoot, I saw no disadvantage in going to high school and further ostracising myself by choice. Did I enjoy high school? Did I what. I compensated for my physical deficiencies by providing evidence of my intelligence [...] – getting good grades, entering into spelling competitions and speech contests, [...] and

otherwise distinguishing myself with highly commendable academic triumphs which are the last bastion of the nerdy student in the Also Ran Competition of Life. (IHIMAERA 2007: 41)

Isaac being highly reflective of his own actions in the past knows he “compensated” for his physical deficiencies by invigorating his mental power, by becoming a “nerd” in the eyes of a society in which the appreciation of mental and physical strength are so widely set apart. Since his body will never grant Isaac the recognition and acknowledgement of his self – masculinity indeed making or in his case preventing a means of identification – he decides to make his life liveable by taking a path different from dominant imaginations. In a world where hegemonic discourse circles around physical ability and corporality (or is it corpor-reality?), he willingly becomes part of a non-dominant discourse, which he unwillingly embodied earlier, in order to subvert the dominant one at a later point. The power education grants him makes his life liveable even though he is immersed in hegemonic bigotry. Just as Georgina notes insightfully: ““There’s nothing for you here, Isaac. With [your clubfoot] holding you back, you will have to make your way through life with your brains”” (IHIMAERA 2007: 48).

The narrator uses the next two pages to give a graphic characterisation of Isaac’s father and the latter’s brothers, most importantly Georgina’s father and Isaac’s Uncle Aaron, head of the extended whānau. The evocation of Māori mythology to characterise the ‘manly’ horde shall be quoted here at length:

Although I speak of them grudgingly, when I was growing up, my father and his brothers were all larger than life and superhuman. A kind of glamour attached to them, especially to Uncle Aaron with his *matinée* good looks. He was a Maori Errol Flynn, my generation’s Tom Cruise, tall, muscular, with a disarming grin. The best way to describe him would be to say he was easy in his skin. Such people take their own powers of persuasion – and the homage of others – for granted. They live in a world that serves them, and Uncle Aaron was accustomed to being served. (IHIMAERA 2007: 46)



Isaac's father and his brothers, most importantly among them Uncle Aaron, are recognised as the dominant model of masculinity within their whānau. Uncle Aaron is 'more' hegemonic than the others: he sets the standard for a version of masculinity that was to be the most desired one, never to be epitomised by any other man than himself. Isaac's father and his brothers are mythologised into superhuman beings and naturalised in their performance so that everybody wishes to perform a similar identity but will always remain incapable of achieving as an outsider to the brethren's bond. For their deeds, their whānau bestows upon them mana (authority, control, influence, prestige or power). Their performance especially of their physical fitness and lucky epitomisation of the current understanding of beauty (in the form of Hollywoodesque glamour and stardom) guarantees them a position of power, but it is their fraternity that adds the touch of divinity and renders everybody standing outside the brotherhood subordinate. Since their manifestation of masculinity is the one in power and wishes to remain in this position, they naturalise their hegemony through acting according to their subordinates' expectations. They take the subordination by others for granted, thus naturalising both their hegemonic and the others' subordinate position. The brothers occupy both a dominant and a hegemonic position of power. Everybody else is subordinate, measuring their own masculinity against their hegemonic construction. Everybody strives to be like them but will always fail. The system is a self-sustaining one. Isaac goes on:

My uncles were smiling, physically imposing beings who strode through life with careless charm and abandon. They were also very sexual. Indeed, as young men they had been notoriously phallus-driven, creating the template by which my own weedy masculinity could only be measured in the negative. Uncle Aaron's amatory exploits, in particular, were legendary and he was said to have shared women – usually, it was rumoured, after some festival sports tournament or cultural event when the rugby team was elated with their victory and any lone woman could be regarded as a natural prize to be taken on the altar of their joint lust. According to such tales, there was nothing wrong with sharing: to the victor the spoils. It was, after all, only some ancient version of *droit de seigneur*. As the leader of the pack, rather than being vilified for it, Uncle Aaron was indulged by his brothers and his doting sisters. Aunt

Hera was forever proclaiming that it was never his fault; it was always the woman's. When he married Auntie Agnes the whole family breathed a sigh of relief; but when, during her first pregnancy, he had his first extramarital affair, my aunts and uncles – even Auntie Agnes – forgave him. Apparently, he was too much of a man for one woman and it was better to accept that this was his natural condition. (IHIMAERA 2007: 46-7)

Here, the brothers' domination is justified by hegemonising their physical might and corporality. To nobody's surprise, the brothers play in the rugby team. Rugby as the national sport and setting the standards for desirable masculinity reaffirms the brothers' position of power. Their sexual exploits are both expression of their domination and reaffirmation of the hegemonic model: the sexual objectification of women is made possible by a position of power and reaffirms this position; and it sends out the message that sexually exploiting women is the desired expression of (therefore hegemonic) masculinity. Foucault mentions that sexuality is the element in power relation with "the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of manoeuvres" (FOUCAULT 1978: 103). Connell deems that sexual objectification of women is one possible manoeuvre to express domination of men over women "promot[ing] meanings that support hegemonic masculinity" (CONNELL 1996: 129). Sexual exploitation and later marriage are the stylised weapons of domination in this story. This behaviour also sets the "template" for all other masculinities that have to be subsequently subordinated, since the hegemonic manifestation is impossible to copy. The tales that were spun around the brethren's dominant phalloi worked a dynamic that not only justified their exploits but also naturalised their patriarchy. It is their deified masculinity that succeeds in constructing around itself a narrative that serves as naturalisation of its position. The order of Butlerian identity formation is seemingly turned around in Ihimaera's world. It is not the sexual exploiting, the *exerting* of sexual dominance over women that makes them recognisable as 'masculine deities'. It is the justifying tales mythologising their *doing* that render sexual exploits a performance of masculine divinity, a stylised act by virtue of which the brothers become (superhumanly) masculine. Phallus-drivenness becomes one aspect associated with hegemonic

masculinity, but it is the fraternity's god-reminiscence that first of all permits the sexual exploits and most importantly triggers the tales' legendising the exploits. Only then may sexual objectification of women become a practice of hegemonic masculinity. Since the system of self-sustainability and self-preservation of domination is so complexly pervaded by processes of naturalisation and justification, it might be impossible to identify any order. Connell calls this the "circular argument": "Men's behaviour is reified in a concept of masculinity that then [...] becomes the explanation (and the excuse) for the behaviour" (CONNELL & MESSERSCHMIDT 2005: 840). The story though suggests that it is the brother's fraternity and imposing physicality that enables their behaviour. It is the force of this hegemonic system, this patriarchy and the power to naturalise itself that facilitates adultery on the part of Uncle Aaron without a vilification of the "transgression". His masculinity is allegedly so 'manly' that only one woman is not enough to satisfy his appetite. The very act that is a performance of his masculinity in order to retain his position of power is reapplied upon him as natural: "it was better to accept that this was his natural condition". His environment 'rationalises' Uncle Aaron's behaviour as inherent and creates a stage on which he may freely do as he pleases. The domination and hegemony of his masculinity above all others ensures the palliation and naturalisation of his actions by his subordinates. Uncle Aaron is the patriarch. His frequent employment of the phallus as instrument of power (enabled by the coloniser's concepts of attribution of power onto the phallus) reaffirms Isaac's subordination through his vilification of the said practices. He depicts his as a "weedy masculinity" and remains in front of locked doors to the behavioural patterns, postures, attitudes, the performance of hegemonic masculinity through sexual adventures. Indeed, Isaac's physical nonconformity fixes his subordinate position within this specific hegemonic discourse *a priori*. Also, his position grants him with potential of subversion.

After having justified the patriarchy of Uncle Aaron and the hegemony of the fraternity through physical superiority over other men, sexual domination over

women and preponderance over the whole whānau through the construction of legends and tales celebrating the two afore mentioned performances, Isaac evokes Māori mythology, adding the dangerous factor of 'tradition' to the brethren's patriarchy:

My father and uncles were like the god brothers of Maori mythology. Around Uncle Aaron, a particular arrogant mythology developed. It was done so cleverly that in the end he expected to be able to get away with anything – and the whanau let him. He was like the god Tane incarnate, the god above all the other gods. Beside him, my father and other uncles were like Tumatauenga, god of war, Tangaroa, the sea god, Rongo, god of agriculture, Ruaumoko, god of earthquakes and Whiro, the death-dealing god.

All the gods were male, and it is told that the Lord Tane wished to create a race that was in his image: humankind. To do this, he needed to create a woman. Accordingly, he asked the Earth Mother, Papatuanuku, to help him. 'Haere atu koe ki a Kurawaka,' she told him. 'Go to Kurawaka, a sacred place at my sexual cleft and, from the red clay that you find there, make you a woman to mate with.' From this time, it is said, has been maintained the position for all males as high and sacred and that of women – after all, they are made of earthly material – as low and profane. (IHIMAERA 2007: 46-7)

It is crucial to Māori cultural identity to find 'realities' in the past to give meaning to the present and place the presence into linear continuity, the events in the past resulting in today's manifestation. With the embedment of Māori mythology in the narration Isaac seeks to reify the fraternity's patriarchy as not only divine but more importantly, 'traditionally' Māori. Even though the brotherhood's hypermasculinity may be exaggerated gendered behaviour to compensate for their subaltern position within New Zealand society, as proclaimed by Karen Pyke (cf. 1996: 531), therefore arising entirely out of colonial context, the wish for continuity and nexus between pre-settler 'truths' and modern inventions is stronger. The background of colonialism is blanked out. Isaac presents mythology as a creed for the orthodox Māori seeking verification of the system of patriarchy as inherent to Māori cultural and societal constitution. The evocation of Māori mythology serves thus two purposes: First, it illustrates the brotherhood's divinity by juxtaposing them with mythic gods. It underlines the fact that their manifestation of masculinity can

never be achieved by an outsider, yet it still sets the standard every other masculinity is weighed against. Second, mythology is employed to explain and justify male domination over women and the current regime of patriarchy. Double-colonisation of Māori women is 'traditionalised'; Māori patriarchy is naturalised. We already know Isaac will become head of his whānau, so aspects of patriarchy may also be attached to his decision to tacitly offer a correspondingly biased reading of a Māori myth. It is this construction of Māori masculinity in contemporary times – “re-authenticated through narratives that establish continuity between a generalized Maori culture and a particular concept of patriarchy” (HOKOWHITU 2007: 116) – that Hokowhitu calls a “hybrid”. And he is right to do so: this manifestation eludes categorisation in either Western or Polynesian. In the story, Isaac's narrative establishes continuity between a Māori myth in which patriarchy is stated as 'natural' and the modern concept of patriarchy that is a manifestation of colonial processes. Uncle Aaron is a hybrid in 'traditional' Māori dress.

Georgina's mother is hospitalised and Aaron forces his daughter to quit school to look after him and her younger brothers. Upon his intellectual endeavours, Isaac is offered a prestigious scholarship in Christchurch boarding college and leaves his whānau. He takes up boxing and fencing and finds remedy for his childhood as a runt in intellectual and academic achievement:

I was surprised and pleased that my fellow students were of a Southern gentlemanly calibre and did not draw attention to my clubfoot. Instead I was treated as an equal and, in academic competition, I proved to some of the Cantabrians' finest sons that I was a force to be reckoned with. (IHIMAERA 2007: 49)

Away from Māori imaginations of masculinity, Isaac gets a chance to prove his worth and flourishes in the egalitarian realm of intellectualism.

In a letter from home he learns that his aunt Agnes has died and Georgina has had to take over the household. Uncle Aaron “is a hard taskmaster” (IHIMAERA 2007: 50), yet, we do not know what his practices of patriarchy entail. On the telephone, Isaac’s mother concludes the conversation with a disturbing declaration: “Things are going to change now for Georgina. I pray for her. She is in God’s hands” (IHIMAERA 2007: 50). Isaac’s mother rejects every spark of responsibility for what is going to happen by invoking God into the conversation. Indeed, Georgina is the hand of God, but the god Tāne, selfish and ruthless, used to getting whatever he desires. At this point, the reader anticipates what Isaac’s mother is referring to; the unknowing narrator apologises:

I didn’t think anything of my mother’s comment at the time [...]. And forgive me, but I was busy and, frankly, enjoying my schooling – making friendships with future professors, judges and captains of industry that have proved their worth by being sustained throughout my youth into my mature adulthood. I didn’t notice when my mother stopped giving me news of Georgina in her letters. (IHIMAERA 2007: 50)

Having accompanied the protagonist several pages, the reader’s empathy lies with Isaac, who finally gets the attention and encouragement that he was deprived of for so long. One cannot blame Isaac for making acquaintances and friendships that will prove useful to his career and lead to his final promotion as head of the whānau. He is but a man striving for a position of power within his means. His rejection of ‘physical’ masculinity as established in his whānau and his assumption of ‘intellectual’ masculinity (a concept independent of bodily fitness that is) as part of a Pākehā world grants him to achieve a position of power that has the potential of subverting Māori ‘physical’ masculinity. In order to assume a dominant (not hegemonic though) position in the future, schooling, education and especially acquaintanceship (as opposed to friendship or mateship) pave the way.

Isaac returns to his home village after the academic year and prides himself on physical and rhetorical growth. His mother is overwhelmed with joy whereas his

father sees only a young man trying to be better than the rest, a “tall poppy” that requires cropping:

‘Goodness,’ [my mother] laughed, surprised, ‘haven’t you grown, son!’ She patted my face, noting how lean I was looking, and poked and prodded, as mother are prone to do, to discern my musculature. She looked forward to my father’s reaction – which was not as forthcoming on my physical appearance, but concerned my elocution. ‘Is that how they talk in Christchurch?’ Dad asked. ‘Like an Englishman? Now that you’re home we’ll fix that.’ (IHIMAERA 2007: 51)

Back home within hegemonic corporality, Isaac’s education does not feature in the discourse of masculinity. It is simply dismissed as ‘arrogance’ by the colonial concept of egalitarianism (tall poppy). Paradoxically, the allegation comes from Isaac’s father, representative of a highly exclusive and elitist manifestation of masculinity, sensing a wave of threat to his superiority in his son’s behaviour. By referring to his son’s speech as being reminiscent of an Englishman’s, Isaac’s father evokes colonial hierarchies. Now, as his own construction of masculinity is a hybrid version in order to align with the colonial masters, he feels threatened by his son employing his education in a voice that resembles the colonial masters’. Isaac’s education, or perhaps ‘performance’ of his education manifests as if in opposition to his father’s identity. His father thus tries immediately to incorporate Isaac into his discourse of masculinity and relocates his subordinate position. That Isaac’s body has changed, too, passes as unnoticed by his father since he accepted his son’s deformity as stable and immutable condition. His son is forever subordinate in his eyes.

Isaac anxiously rushes off to visit Georgina, only to witness the results of Uncle Aaron’s patriarchy:

The boys were sitting at the table, waiting and watching their father. When he appeared with me they asked him, ‘May we go now, Dad?’ ‘Say hello to Isaac first,’ Uncle Aaron told them. ‘Hello, cousin,’ they said. Then, taking another look at their father and their sister, Georgina, they left the room.

All this time, Georgina had been sitting, her face downcast, at the table in the place where her mother had once presided. I walked up to her and went to kiss her cheek.

'No, don't –' she said. She gave a frightened look at her father. Uncle Aaron laughed again. 'What's wrong with you, Georgina? You've been looking forward to seeing your boyfriend. Give him a kiss.'

Have you ever seen a person with dead eyes? That's how Georgina's looked; behind them, nothing. She raised her face so that I could kiss her lips; they were cold, so cold. Quickly, she got up from her chair, collected some of the dishes and carried them to the kitchen.

Uncle Aaron began to laugh and laugh.

It was then that I knew what was happening. (IHIMAERA 2007: 52)

Uncle Aaron's has left the two boys intimidated and Georgina a victim of incest. A shocked young man runs back to his parents to challenge them. They assure him that they tried their possible to stop Georgina's sexual exploitation by her own father but that the girl herself refused to leave her father. The whole whānau including Georgina herself fail to see that she is bullied into accepting the atrocities committed to her by her own father by his patriarchy over his family and his whānau. Not only have they started to accept his actions, they also talk them right: Belonging to a Pentecostal Sect, Isaac's other uncles and aunties believe in the word of the Old Testament and similarly to Isaac utilising Māori mythology to justify contemporary male domination over women, they now recite the character of Lot who procreated with his two daughters. "In like wise, your cousin Georgina is like one of Lot's daughters. Her union has been sanctified by the example of the two daughters of Lot" (IHIMAERA 2007: 54). The quotation of the book of Genesis is the model for the incest, and the incest the recognisable stylisation of the quotation. It does not only render Aaron's action acceptable but even supports the act of incest. "The family banded together and unified around Uncle Aaron" (IHIMAERA 2007: 55). Uncle Aaron is a patriarch with truly god-like abilities: Through his exertion of domination and more importantly superhuman hegemony and by securing that no one will ever achieve or be able to dispute his status, he makes sure for himself of his whānau's compliance and obedience. And apparently, he may thoroughly trust on his whānau's strategy to interpret his actions, however abhorrent, as inherent of his position in the whānau and recognise in them his divinity. The



process of naturalisation of hegemonic behaviour has become a stylised repetition of acts of narrative creation (by continuous mythologising) and accommodation (by explaining his actions through his divine identity). It is precisely this stylised repetition of act of 'putting justifying lipstick on the pig' that identifies the whānau as subordinates to their patriarch. And the patriarch's acknowledgement of his whānau's performance reaffirms his position again and again and allows him to continue the crime against his daughter. Isaac admits that he "was astonished that this would occur but realised that the whānau was moving to protect one among itself" (IHIMAERA 2007: 55). The extended whānau as microcosm of society tries to maintain order and stability. That they would protect one among themselves who commits serious sexual abuse against his daughter and not his victim is illustrative of the destructive and totalitarian force of Māori patriarchy.

In an attempt to rescue Georgina, Isaac appears at her house and wants to take her away. Georgina is revealing that she is pregnant when the two are interrupted by Uncle Aaron and Isaac's father:

'I'm here to take you home, son,' my father said. 'Nobody should ever come between a man and his wife.'  
'His wife?' I asked credulously. 'Georgina is not Uncles Aaron's wife. She's his daughter.'  
Uncle Aaron's face stilled. I could tell he was angry – but Dad was there. He turned to Isaac Senior and laughed softly. 'Don't worry, brother, real men don't hit cripples.' (IHIMAERA 2007: 56)

Isaac's open pronouncement of the 'facts' ("she's his daughter") as accusation is an act of disobedience to the dominant hegemon who is used to his environment's total compliance with his actions. Isaac commits 'apostasy': he violates Māori orthodoxy in abandoning the creed in Aaron's divine hegemony and rightfulness. Not shattered in his masculinity but certainly puzzled by this act of rebellion, Uncle Aaron immediately re-establishes his full mighty masculinity by stating grandly that he, as a 'real' man – as hegemonic model of masculinity, does not impose violence upon subordinate masculinities. Isaac with his physical impairment does not

– *can* not play in his league, and Aaron would never lower himself to align with Isaac. Isaac's reaction however is a physical one:

I got up from the bed. [...] I don't think he had realised how much I had grown. I was eye to eye now, and he didn't tower over me. 'Real men might not hit cripples,' I said. 'They also don't commit incest with their daughters. As for cripples, we have no problem hitting sexual abusers.' I slapped him. A good old backhand rather than a punch to the guts. There something about slapping a man, particularly when it's done by another man, that is more shocking than using fisticuffs. It sends a different kind of message: 'You are contemptible and, indeed, you are beneath contempt.' (IHIMAERA 2007: 56-7)

Additional to challenging Aaron verbally, Isaac imposes physical violence on his uncle. He employs his slap not in order to physically hurt Aaron but to degrade him and to lacerate his masculine pride. Aaron loses his temper, has a go at Isaac who, trained in the art of fencing, pushes him to the ground. Isaac's father puts an end to this, practically preventing his son from killing his uncle. As readers, our sentiment upon Isaac's violent challenge to Aaron's masculinity is one of satisfaction. Isaac deploys a decent slap, a just slap and overpowers Aaron – and he does so with grandeur; he feels good about it and so does the reader. The slap satisfies our sense of justice and ethics. How is that? Brendan Hokowhitu explains that there are two different discourses of Māori male violence that both arose during colonial times:

[T]he initial violent resistance by Maori men in the 1860s Civil Land Wars and their subsequent complicity with the British war effort in the First and the Second World Wars promulgated divergent discourses of Maori male violence as ignoble and noble. The discourse of ignobility justified colonial violence, subjugation, and land annexation, while the later discourse of nobility served to assimilate and endear Maori men to the New Zealand public; both fitted their respective historical contexts. The tension between noble and ignoble adjudications of Maori male violence was naturalized as an ambivalence that still resonates today, especially in popular culture. (HOKOWHITU 2007: 117-8)

With regards to the short story, the discourses of noble and ignoble Māori male violence become most visible in the tensions between Uncle Aaron and Isaac. Uncle Aaron's exertion of violence against his whānau and against his own daughter is part of the ignoble discourse; whereas Isaac's violent behaviour towards his uncle is a discourse of noble Māori male violence. The decisive factor here is that Uncle Aaron exerts violent power against helpless, weaker beings in the form of women and children in order to reaffirm his dominant position; his intentions are understood as ignoble. Isaac, the brave, reacts with violence against a much stronger, in fact hegemonic god-like being in order to defend one of Aaron's victims; thus, his intentions stem of noble character. To employ the two discourses of Māori male violence in this story is decisive for the character drawing and the expression of their identities. From the beginning, Uncle Aaron is depicted as the Māori 'traditional' patriarch, the colonial hybrid that engages in violent hypermasculinity to compensate for his subordinate status within colonial processes. He exerts violence in order to sustain his position of domination and hegemony. In particular, he abuses physically weaker and subordinate beings. Isaac with his clubfoot is the subordinate masculinity who learns how to subvert the dominant model even though he lacks the hegemonic corporality. During his sojourn in the Pākehā world, he has not only achieved intellectually but has learned how to compensate for his physical deficiencies with the help of his walking cane. His physical impairment does no longer restrict him into subordination. He violently overpowers the dominant hegemon after having accused him of exerting violence upon weaker subjects and in so establishes his own masculinity as the dominant one – not in fact the hegemonic version – but the more dominant indeed.

To digress slightly at this point, the depiction of violence in the story mirrors an observation made by sociologist Karen Pyke, mentioned earlier in this chapter. She observes higher-class indigenous men pointing their finger at the violence and abusive practices of hypermasculinities "as an example of the untamed masculine brutality that they supposedly, do not share" (PYKE 1996: 532) and through that

establish their superiority over lower-class men. This is an observation that can easily be applied to the story: Isaac through spending a long time in the Pākehā world being educated has acquired aspect of higher-class member of society and indeed, he points out Uncle Aaron's brutality against his daughter to underline his own incapability of committing such atrocities. In the same breath though, he clarifies his willingness to exert violence upon sexual abusers, invoking both the ignoble and the noble discourse of Māori male violence. Pyke's observation finds expression in Isaac's performance of violent superiority over the hegemonic masculinity. Isaac is privileged by Pākehā education, taking in aspects of the colonisers in order to make himself recognisable as a higher-class masculinity within society. Aaron, even though he is the hegemonic manifestation of masculinity in his whānau, belongs with lower-class masculinities outside of his little 'kingdom' since he engages in hypermasculinity as compensatory opposition to the colonial masters. Isaac does not share the same discourse of Māori male violence as Aaron, for the higher-class masculinity roams in noble discourse whereas the lower-class is an agent of ignoble Māori male violence. This is of course a problematic message sent by Ihimaera: Isaac returns from the Pākehā world with Western, sound morale and ethics, or "enlightened promises", deploying Hokowhitu's wording. (HOKOWHITU 2007: 131). Since he is the only one vilifying Aaron's actions and at the same Aaron's patriarchy is considered 'traditionally' and truly Māori by his whānau (because the colonial hybrid made it so), Ihimaera creates an awfully colonial dichotomy of enlightenment versus Māori, Western ethics and morale versus dysfunctional and destructive traditional values. He deprives Māori of their ability for enlightenment on the grounds that only Pākehā global norms can offer such a remedy. Sadly, this dichotomy reaffirms racial discourse and Māori stereotyping.

Ihimaera's emphasis lies on the deterioration of Māori communities through the realisation of the 'traditional' Māori patriarchy and the community's blind acceptance of its 'truth':

As soon as we returned home, I told my father, 'I am ashamed of you, you are a weakling and you are a coward just like the rest of your brothers and sisters.'

'Apologise to your father,' my mother said.

My Uncle Aaron was indeed godlike. He was so adored and revered that when he took Georgina, his own daughter, 'to wife', nobody was prepared to stop him. (IHIMAERA 2007: 57)

Leaving the unenlightened behind, Isaac decides to go back to Christchurch to attend university. He decides to tell on Uncle Aaron and anonymously calls the police. "But police in those days were not as committed about tackling cases of domestic violence, rape or child molestation" (IHIMAERA 2007: 58). Aaron's patriarchy bullies his whānau into silence and protection for himself; the police drop the charges. Then the shocking news reaches him that Uncle Aaron and "his wife" have had a baby girl: "I shivered with anger at the way in which [my mother] said it. The fact of the incestuous relationship was being covered up" (IHIMAERA 2007: 58).

Years pass and as Isaac graduates from university, he makes "some semblance of peace" (IHIMAERA 2007: 61) with his whānau and visits occasionally. He meets Georgina with her daughter: "[S]he saw me examining Makareti. Instead of being offended she smiled. 'No, she bears no mark of sin upon her – and to make sure I have no more children I've had my tubes tied. [...] The sin is her father's and mine, not hers'" (IHIMAERA 2007: 62). Georgina realises that she has been and is still seriously wronged, and tries to live a liveable life as best as the circumstances in a patriarchal regime may permit.

Isaac and a couple of his friends are invited along to Isaac's twenty-first birthday party by his parents and whānau. He is handed the key to adulthood. Curiously though, this is the event that implements Isaac's kudos within his whānau – because of his friends:

As for my extended whanau, it was interesting to see their reaction to my friends, especially to Felicity and Anthony – Felicity’s father was a member of parliament and somebody down at the marae clicked on Anthony’s surname – Walcott – and realised his father had been a famous All Black. A strange thing happened: I began to go up in my whanau’s estimation, primarily because of the divinity conferred upon me by my friends. (IHIMAERA 2007: 63)

It is not his academic success that is accepted as expression of power, but it is his friends’ hegemonic position due to their reputable fathers. To descend from an MP or an All Black guarantees indeed a hegemonic position in a society where sportive achievement (mind, he played for the nation!) and politics are associated with might. And apparently, *knowing* direct descendents from an MP or an All Black is enough to relocate deformed subordinate Isaac up in the hierarchy into the divine realms of his ancestors. Power is established through the ‘right’ acquaintance, a very ‘Westernly’ characteristic trait. During the dinner, Isaac’s relatives tell “heroic memories of myself that I couldn’t remember – perhaps they had mistaken me for somebody else” (IHIMAERA 2007: 65). The dynamics within the extended whānau also work in favour of Isaac’s current hegemony positioning: His current hegemonic position is narrated into collective memories of the whānau. The same process as the justification and accommodation of Uncle Aaron’s action through the employment of myths happens now. Isaac’s personal narrative is reinterpreted and heroised to authenticate his hegemonic manifestation in the present. His friends are delighted by Isaac’s ‘wonderful’ family. He responds: “We put on a good show” (IHIMAERA 2007: 65). Isaac alludes to the performativity of their identities and their performance of subordination to their patriarch Aaron and now to him, since his friends trigger his tribal promotion.

Uncle Aaron, Georgina and her little girl are not attending the party; Georgina doesn’t want to leave Makareti alone with Aaron. After the party, Isaac is woken and taken to Georgina and Uncle Aarons’s house. He finds her in the main bedroom. She has shot Uncle Aaron and is waiting for him to bleed to death on their

marital bed. She tells Isaac about her father-husband interfering with Makareti, his own granddaughter and concludes: “[H]e has to pay. It’s what happens with men who have no boundaries” (IHIMAERA 2007: 67). Georgina was unable to wrestle herself out of her father’s patriarchal grip but she is determined to save her daughter. She shoots herself in front of Isaac’s eyes and demands of Isaac to take care of Makareti and never tell her the secret about her father’s real identity:

The mess – there was a lot of it following that day when Georgina shot and killed Uncle Aaron. Of course, our family, with its Pentecostal beliefs, vilified her. After all, she was the murderer and she had also killed herself. What possible place could she have before the throne of God? Was she brought onto the marae and farewelled in the appropriate manner? No. But Uncle Aaron was. I made sure to be at his funeral; I wanted to make sure he was in his coffin. I didn’t leave until the lid was screwed down.

As for Georgina, she was buried just outside the family graveyard, but over the years, I have forcibly managed to get the fenceline altered. (IHIMAERA 2007: 71)

Even in death, Uncle Aaron, the godlike, exercises patriarchal power over his whānau. He is being honoured and revered whereas his daughter and wife is condemned. Isaac however, once acquired the necessary power, altered the graveyard’s boundaries to include Georgina into the community. The ground upon which the sense of togetherness is established is altered according to Isaac’s imagination. He also makes sure Aaron’s legacy comes to an end:

I became Makareti’s father. Although Mum and Dad brought her up, I adopted her. On the family whakapapa, Makareti’s line shows that I am her dad and Georgina is her mother, and that my parents are her grandparents. I’ve managed to erase Uncle Aaron in the same way that he tried to erase my cousin Georgina when he took her ‘to wife’. (IHIMAERA 2007: 72)

Isaac initiates a *damnatio memoriae* (through the act of *abolitio nominis*) of Uncle Aaron’s ‘reign’: he desecrates the patriarch who enjoyed a godlike status throughout his lifetime. The truth remains secret and hidden, and Isaac has been paying off those who still know about the secret. However, Talia, Makareti’s daughter and

Isaac's most beloved mokopuna (granddaughter), has been told about her whakapapa being impure and shoddy. Isaac has visited his auntie who has told on Talia's incestuous descent and he poleaxes her with his walking cane, exerting 'noble' violence to protect his granddaughter. Talia turns to Isaac for solace and reconciliation with her past:

Isaac tells Talia of the god Tāne and how he created the first woman and procreated with her the Girl of Dawn, Hinetitama. When she was grown up, she was desired by her father and he made her his wife. Hinetitama bore Tane a daughter. But then she started being curious about her whakapapa. She knew that her mother was made of clay but she did not know who her father was. When she finds out that Tāne is her father and her husband, she resolves to go to the underworld and becomes Hinenuitepo, 'The Goddess of Death'. Tāne would look after their children in life and she would look after them in death. Isaac draws the connection between Georgina and Hinenuitepo and narrates the legend to stress the nurturing role of the Goddess of Death, lovingly gathering in their children granting them redemption. In the role of the Goddess of Death, Georgina is absolved of her ignominy and free to welcome her children in forgiving death. The story ends with Isaac's conclusion: "Oh, how I love this child so. Makareti's daughter. Georgina's granddaughter. My mokopuna. My granddaughter. And in the gentling night I tell her what I want her to hear" (IHIMAERA 2007: 75). In accordance with Māori protocol, Isaac offers a justification and establishes meaning for the status quo through the specific, conditioned reading of Māori mythology. He makes the present 'true' and 'natural'. But this time, Māori mythology is deployed to heal and soothe, draw away from the sickly and abhorrent misuse of myths by the dysfunctional whānau. Isaac succeeds in assuming a role of Māori patriarchy aloof the colonial hybrid.

"Ask the Posts of the House" depicts a clash of two different discourses of Māori patriarchy: The imagination of 'traditional' Māori patriarchal masculinity is presented in the character of Uncle Aaron and his brothers. They enact their physical



might in the arenas of sport and sexual exploitation of women, their conformity to the current ideal of beauty, and the fraternity-effect to create around them an aura of divine, hegemonic masculinity. Their hegemonic position guarantees their domination within their whānau. Their whānau awed by the manifestation of masculinity and patriarchal force play their own part in continually reaffirming Uncle Aaron's deified patriarchy and his freedom to *do* however he pleases. They will talk *it*, the act of incest, right, through the invention of legends, myths and literal readings of the Bible. The whānau sees to it that all behavioural patterns of Uncle Aaron and his brothers are interpreted as manifestations of their masculinity and divinity, and that they hegemonically set the standard for every other man in the community. The dangers of 'traditional' Māori patriarchy are obvious: Even though it is a colonial hybrid, as Hokowhitu plausibly argues, the authentication through narratives and continuities that are deliberately invented and established via allegedly 'true' Māori sources of pre-settler times leads to an attachment of the attribute 'traditional' and 'justified' upon the model of Māori patriarchy. An apostasy of allegedly 'traditional' Māori regime would entail a betrayal of one's identity: to subvert the patriarch strips the rebel of his/her Māoriness (so does Isaac's father to his son when he visits from boarding school). In such a way, it is made impossible to break out of the system that through patriarchal domination sustains itself successfully. This is also why Uncle Aaron is able to get away with taking his own daughter as wife. He does not only get away; his actions are justified and verified through the authentication via deployed narratives. The system of patriarchy and all respective actions and attitudes work their way into the whānau's protection.

Into this corporal world, Isaac is born with a clubfoot. Therefore, he is deprived of the ability to perform according to the hegemonic model of masculinity *a priori*. Being a deviant subordinate, he sets out to consolidate his aberration through education in the Pākehā world. He becomes a hybrid himself, but since the colonial hybrid of 'traditional' Māori patriarchy has naturalised itself, Isaac's (perhaps postcolonial) hybridity – education being privileges of the Pākehā world – is vili-

fied in his whānau. On several occasions, Georgina highlights his incompatibility with his whānau: ““There’s nothing for you here, Isaac”” (IHIMAERA 2007: 48). Isaac opens out to achieve hegemony and affiliated power in the globalised world of economics. He acquires transnational business masculinity with Māori cultural background. Money proves to be an effective way to gain power and in the end, also succeeds in outdoing Uncle Aaron’s patriarchal powers: Isaac erases him off the family chart and reintegrates Georgina by altering the fenceline of the graveyard: actions he can only master with money. Even though Isaac’s postcolonial hybrid business masculinity still reaffirms the system of patriarchy (with a turnover in the discourse of power from physical prowess to economic success), his is a benevolent patriarchy with ‘noble’ intentions. Whereas Uncle Aaron’s domination featured ‘ignoble’ violence against weaker and subordinate subjects which led to the whānau’s disability in protecting the victims, Isaac’s exertion of violence and power happens ‘nobly’ and justly and in the end comes out as the healthy ‘winner’ manifestation. Uncle Aaron’s ‘bad’, pathologically malfunctioning and destructive patriarchy is replaced by Isaac’s ‘good’ one, healing old wounds through sound Māoriness.

Brendan Hokowhitu, who has exclaimed his criticism on the construction of ‘traditional’ Māori patriarchy in the film *The Whale Rider*, specifies the problematic effects with such representations: Male domination as most common model in indigenous cultures reaffirms Western superiority. Other masculinities therefore are continually represented as static and untransformed whereas Western masculinities have allegedly enjoyed more freedom in their construction (cf. HOKOWHITU 2007: 130). This is precisely akin to the depiction of ‘traditional’ Māori masculinity in “Ask the Posts of the House”. The hegemonic model of masculinity in Isaac’s extended whānau is an elitist version of some ‘traditional’ Māori patriarchy frozen in time. Isaac however, unfit for epitomising that one desired type of hegemonic body, learns in the Pākehā world other ways of expressing dominant masculinity and power (money and rhetoric authority). It is his exile from his home village that

enables him to change and gain power differently from his whānau's ideas. His newly acquired aspects of business/money-based masculinity combined with his sound Māori values and spirituality promises healing to a community whose regime was cruel and allegedly immutable, incapable of 'enlightenment'. The discourses on Māori male violence move along similar lines: Aaron exercises 'ignoble' violence upon his subjects, whereas Isaac's violent behavior towards Aaron and later his aunt is depicted as 'noble' and just. The 'positive' discourses of healing, soundness and noble violence remain in the hands of Western conceptualisation intermingled with Māori protocol; 'traditional' Māori masculinity features the discourses of violent domination, annihilation of the individual and noxiousness. Both Isaac and Aaron represent Māori patriarchy, one nobly and one ignobly, and thus strengthen (post)colonial hybrid formations. I would like express my compliance to Brendan Hokowhitu when he states:

The hybridization of Maori masculinity and British patriarchy must be acknowledged as an out-of-date performance, which resulted from colonial circumstances but no longer serves an integrative function, and should be discontinued. [...] I suggest any conceptualization of an "authentic" of "traditional" Maori man is an illusion. (HOKOWHITU 2007: 134)

'Traditional' Māori patriarchy is portrayed as the main impediment to acts of healing and soundness; Western understandings of power combined with 'sound' Māori values, narration and spirituality may liberate from the claws of an alleged tradition in Witi Ihimaera's "Ask the Posts of the House".

## 2 BREAKING TRADITION

“Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” proclaimed Foucault (1978/1990: 95): This chapter is aimed at the examination of manifestations of New Zealand masculinities that challenge hegemonic traditions – sets of behavioural patterns, attitudes, speech patterns, affects, styles, that have become obsolete and perhaps obscene, perhaps inappropriate and unappreciated. Many a discourse of masculinity that has been crafted into a credible tradition and retold as such year in year out finds itself challenged, critiqued, criticised, or deconstructed in the short stories.

### 2.1 LETTING HE-MAN DROWN: “A GREAT DAY” (1937)

The sexual energy behind his [Frank Sargeson’s] interest in men deepened the masculine emphasis of our literature. (JENSEN 1995: 79)

In the years after Katherine Mansfield’s death in 1923, there was without doubt one man who dominated the literary output of New Zealand and shaped what was to become New Zealand national literary culture: Norris Frank Davey alias Frank Sargeson. Between the late 1930s and early 50s he published some forty short stories and sketches in periodicals and magazines, most of which are snap-shots of lesser occurrences in New Zealand between the two world wars and the 1930s depression. Sargeson’s male characters are mostly unhappy labourers or unemployed men, unmarried or unfortunately married, who, in the laconic tradition of New Zealand men, deploy their bodies to express what they are verbally unable to articulate within an emotionally inapt imagination of masculinity. Sargeson conveys some curious inner spirit of New Zealand working-class vernacular that re-

sents its environment and challenges both the figure of the Man Alone and the Family Man. To illustrate my point briefly I want to refer to “A Man and His Wife” for example. Ted, the protagonist of this story, is a drinking, working-class male character who prefers to talk to his dog rather than his wife, until she finally divorces him:

It was pretty hard for him when his wife got her separation, because it was all in the paper, and everybody started making jokes. When she got in Court his wife certainly got going about the sort of husband he was. Besides always getting drunk, she said, he kept a dog, and he'd talk to the dog when he'd never talk to her. [...] Well, our gang certainly thought up plenty of jokes about that dog. [...] He had it sleeping at the foot of his bed. [...] But later on it got under a bus along the road and that was the finish. Ted took it pretty hard, but he wasn't the sort that ever says much. (SARGESON 1964: 113)

The year 1929 traumatised Norris Davey's life when he was found guilty in court of having sexual contacts with another man. Davey pleaded guilty and got away with probation, being exhibited as the innocent youth who had been seduced by an older man. Davey lost his job as solicitor and would never practise again. His name was published in the newspapers so his ostracism was consolidated. Davey, later renaming himself Frank Sargeson for obvious reasons was bound to keep silent for the rest of his life. He held a life-long position of 'neither confirm nor deny' (cf. WELLS 1997: 10). In 1940 he won a national literature award for his story “The Making of a New Zealander”. Homoerotic latencies in his stories were easily overridden by the nationalist appeal of his writing (cf. BRICKELL 2008: 206-10). How his life situation influenced or informed his writing is still subject to intensive literary research and many a queer reading has been employed upon his short stories. Peter Wells suggests the perhaps best answer to critics that a homosexual writer could shape the literature of a nation at the same time:

Frank Sargeson, above all, is the best exponent of a literary form investigating the various strands of homophobia, and its twin, homoeroticism. His short stories, elliptical, in working class Kiwi argot, show a master of the irony of this double-edged situation. Perhaps it took a

homosexual – a gender outsider – to appropriate and iconicise ‘the language of the antipodean heterosexual male’, and in doing so, turn it into both fiction and a highly wrought artform. (WELLS 1997: 18)

Kai Jensen observes how the masculinist tradition of New Zealand’s literary production became Sargeson’s vehicle and disguise to implement a queer aesthetics: “The masculinism of New Zealand literary culture in the 1930s and 1940s was stimulating to Sargeson, and he made himself complicit in it” (JENSEN 1995: 80). Sargeson succeeded in using the heterosexual assumptions of the concept of *mate-ship* to express a possible, latently homoerotic appeal. Sargeson pioneers what Peter Wells will engage in some five to six decades later. As a now thoroughly accepted queer writer Sargeson made himself not only a home in a masculinist New Zealand literature but also dominated the literary output for decades<sup>3</sup> and added richness to the writings of his time by incorporating the level of latent male homosexuality and thus giving psychological depth, and subversive power to his characters.

The early sinister short story “A Great Day”, which I would like to scrutinise in this chapter, was first published in 1937 in *The Bulletin* and depicts the fishing trip of two blokes<sup>4</sup> – Ken and Fred – that ends in a surprisingly dark finale with the murder of hegemonic masculinity.

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<sup>3</sup> “At this point we could also rebuke Sargeson for his lack of evenhandedness towards women and, a related complaint, for his share in setting up a distinctly masculine literary culture, where women writers did not flourish in any number for some four decades [1930s-70s].” (JENSEN 1995: 80)

<sup>4</sup> In 2002, Adam Stevens directed the short film *Beautiful* in which two blokes, Barry and Kev, set out for a fishing trip in their dinghy into the idyllic sunrise. While Kev puts on some lotion Barry mentions slapping his wife. The situation escalates when Kev wants Barry to slap him too: “It’s alright. We’re mates.” Kev admits his sexual attraction to Barry and wants him to exercise sexual domination over him, which his mate refuses to do. “You slap your fucking missus round. Cos why? Cos you think that’s what fucking blokes do? But you don’t slap your fucking mates around! Oh no! That’s a bit fucking weird! [...] So I guess a blowjob’s out of the question?” Fishing trips seem to have energetic potential for masculinities to perform the usually latent; the fishing dinghy in its spatial confinement is a stage for ‘creepy’ New Zealand masculinity.

The two men leave for their trip early in the morning. Ken, the stronger of the two, carries the dinghy, Fred the gear. Fred secretly admires his mate's physical grandeur: "I wouldn't mind if I was a big hefty bloke like you, he said. Well, Ken didn't say anything to that" (SARGESON 1964: 68). Fred starts to row but soon realises he is heading the wrong way and he is too slow:

So they changed places and Ken pulled wonderfully well. For a time it was more a mental shock you got with each jerk of the dinghy. You realised how strong he was. He had only a shirt and a pair of shorts on, and his big body, hard with muscle, must have been over six feet long. Gee, I wish I had your body, Fred said. It's no wonder the girls chase you. But look at the sort of joker I am. (SARGESON 1964: 69)

Ken's body is of muscular physicality and in light of New Zealand cult of physical virility is the hegemonic body. Fred admires and envies his mate by stressing his heterosexual appeal. Fred's expression of admiration might also be sourced from specific homoerotic desire. Fred watches Ken *perform* his physical virility through the notion of activeness, the movement of the dinghy and wishes for the ability to perform similarly. David Morgan observes in his layout about men, power and bodies that broadly generalised "it is the relatively powerless who find themselves reflecting upon their identity" (MORGAN 1993: 73) whereas the powerful are said to do so only in situations of crisis. The story world of New Zealand as a society that celebrates, even demands physical virility as sign of masculinity, leaves Fred to ponder about his own physical incapability to manifest the expected identity. Ken though, has no need to reflect upon his place within this society. He is the "big he-man" (SARGESON 1964: 70) and Fred emphasises the difference in appeal between him and his pal:

'[I]f a man's been to one of those High Schools it makes him different. Not any better, mind you. I'm all for the working class because I'm a worker myself, but an educated bloke has the advantage over a bloke like me. The girls chase him just to mention one thing, specially if he happens to be a big he-man as well.'  
Ken didn't say anything to that. (SARGESON 1964: 70)

Fred emphasises Ken's education being above his only to put him down in the same breath (as application of the concept of the tall poppy). Yet again, he underlines Ken's heterosexual appeal in both intellectual and physical respects. And Ken, again, does not react to this utterance.

One may now take the opportunity to examine the occupation of fishing and the space of a fishing dinghy. David Morgan sheds light on angling as a conventional activity of masculinity: First, fishing takes place in the public space although the activity itself is a privatised one. Leisure angling and its denoted space, the dinghy, are sites of masculinity and a space dedicated to the deployment of the male body. The activity itself is associated with bodily skill and control again credited to the male body (cf. MORGAN 1993: 77). Now, the physical closeness in a confined space such as a dinghy does not necessarily create homosociality. However, the broader context of New Zealand requires a strong sense of male bonding: homosociality is a naturalised expression of hegemonic masculinity.

Ken, the strong and active one and therefore exponent of hegemonic masculinity, has naturalised his own identity, his body and his self. Therefore, he does not need to comment on Fred's listing of his superiority in physical and educational matters that Fred does apparently not share. Ken perceives his hegemonic status not as what it is. He might just simply perceive himself as a 'man' and is easy in his skin. Fred is highly reflective of his own less desired body and thus inferior, less attractive position in society. The girls do not chase him; he is less 'manly'. Two different bodies confined in one little dinghy create unpredictable tensions. Fred starts to brood:

What good's a man's strength anyway? Say he goes and works in an office.

I hadn't thought of that.

Another thing, he gets old. Fancy you getting old and losing your strength? Wouldn't it be a shame?



Sure, Ken said. Why talk about it?  
It sort of fascinates me. You'll die someday, and where'll that big frame of yours be then?  
That's an easy one. Pushing up the daisies.  
It might as well be now as anytime, mightn't it?  
Good Lord, I don't see that.  
A man'd forget for good. It'd be just the same as it is out here on a day like this. Only better.  
Ken stopped rowing to throw away his cigarette.  
My God, he said, you're a queer customer. (SARGESON 1964: 71)

Fred broods about the sensuousness of the hegemonic New Zealand body that Ken personifies. It cannot be deployed in office work and when one grows old, the strength diminishes. Without bodily strength nothing remains. The physical virility that bestows potent power upon its bearer takes the power with it into the grave. According to Fred's logic, the moment of death, of the certain diminishing of both body and assigned power, may be then and may be now. The result is still the same. Ken reacts puzzled on thus ponderings; he calls Fred a "queer customer". Even though used as a nonsexual connotation to describe Fred's untraditional, strangely misplaced philosophical excursion in a fishing dinghy, Sargeson was most certainly aware of the word's non-(hetero)normative semantics. Apart from acting 'not quite right', according to Ken, he strips Fred of a slice of traditional masculinity and appropriate behaviour in a little fishing dinghy. The dinghy is not a space in which thoughts about body, strength and death should be discussed; it is too public a site in which conduct is hegemonically defined.

The two men start fishing a few miles off shore: "You couldn't hear a sound or see anything moving. It was another world. The houses on the shore didn't belong. Nor the people either. Wouldn't you like to stay out here for good? Fred said. Ring off, Ken said. I got a bite" (SARGESON 1964: 71). Fred feels gorgeous in the dinghy, far off the shore. It is his haven of comfort. In asking Ken's compliance though, he reaps disregard by the man who apparently starts to feel uncomfortable in Fred's presence. The creepiness finds no end:

I've been thinking, Fred said, it's funny you never learnt to swim.  
Oh I don't know. Up to now I've always lived in country towns.  
Doesn't it make you feel a bit windy?  
On a day like this! Anyhow, you couldn't swim that distance yourself.  
Oh couldn't I! You'd be surprised ... (SARGESON 1964: 72)

Admitting his shortcomings in a situation where said shortcomings could prove detrimental to his life should trigger anxiety in Ken. But he plays the insufficiency back to Fred - imprudently so, because his assumption of Fred's insufficiency is a false syllogism caused by cultural 'terms and conditions'. Ken assumes that because Fred lacks a muscular body, Ken will likewise prove incapable of deploying his body and swim the long distance. Ken's false syllogism is informed by the cultural understanding of the naturalised connection between muscularity and physical power and ability. His cultural background has taught him to believe in muscularity to equal a certain amount of ability and skill. The lack of muscularity thus, logical extrapolation, causes a decimation of ability and skill. According to his own powerful masculinity that he manifests mainly thanks to his corporal dimensions Ken cannot believe in his own insufficiencies. Surrounded by deep water, sitting in a tiny dinghy does not make him anxious even though he cannot swim. His seductive belief in his power, that is indeed a cultural credo, deceives him into overestimation of his own capabilities – in short: Ken's cultural upbringing has installed in him a sense of hubris. And akin to the tragedies of ancient times, Ken's hubris will be his demise.

Fred's subordinate position in the hierarchy of masculinities and society leads him to compensate by sadistic domination over animals:

He is no good, Fred said. And he worked the fish off the hook and held it in his hand. They're pretty little chaps, aren't they? he said. Look at his colours.  
Let him go, Ken said.  
Poor little beggar, Fred said. I bet he wonders what's struck him. He's trying to get his breath. Funny isn't it, when there's plenty of air about?  
[...]

Oh for God's sake, Ken said.

I bet in less than five minutes he forgets about how he was nearly suffocated, Fred said, and he threw the fish back. (SARGESON 1964: 72)

Fred clearly enjoys holding the little fish at his mercy. Ken feels uneasy about Fred's sadistic act of domination, but is not inclined to interfere. That the fish is incapable of breathing when there is so much air around is indeed irony of fate and gives a sinister inkling about what is going to happen.

Fred suggests to row to the other end of the uninhabited island to pull up mussels. Ken is worried about the wind and the tide that would be working against them on their way back to the mainland. Fred is playing up to Ken's hubris with the words "Anyhow, what's it matter when a man's out with a big hefty bloke like you?" (SARGESON 1964: 73) and Ken gives in. Fred starts to pull up mussels but his physical strength is soon exploited: "You can see what a weak joker I am." (SARGESON 1964: 75) Naturally, his mate gives him a hand, though he has to disembark the dinghy to do so. Now, having dislocated his mate out of the safe space of the dinghy – turned him into a *fish out of water* – Fred has his mate where he wants him:

Fred managed to pull himself together and shove off the dinghy and hop in. And if you'd been sitting in the stern as he pulled away you'd have seen that he had his eyes shut. Nor did he open them except when he took a look ahead to see where he was going, and with the cotton-wool in his ears it was difficult for him to hear.

So for a long time he rowed like that against seas that were getting bigger and bigger, but about half-way back to the shore he took a spell. He changed over to the other side of the seat, so he didn't have to sit facing the island, and he just sat there keeping his dinghy straight on. Then when he felt that he had collected all his strength he stood up and capsized the dinghy. It took a bit of doing but he did it.

And after that, taking it easy, he started on his long swim for the shore. (SARGESON 1964: 75)

He leaves Ken behind, letting him drown.

On the surface, what happens is an incident of premeditated murder or negligence to provide assistance. It is surprising that Fred should not watch his friend die, having earlier proven to enjoy the voyeurism of a suffering creature at his mercy. He even closes his eyes and covers his ears. The story pulls away from drowning Ken and focuses on Fred and his determination to physically *outdo* his mate. After leaving his friend to die, Fred could have easily rowed all the way back but it seems of great importance to prove to himself (and the dying mate) that he is capable of swimming all the way back. He proves his skill and ability and even though he lacks the New Zealand cultural (muscular) body he gains full control over Ken's body.

Ken being a "he-man" and a "hefty bloke" is deceived by cultural assumption (strong physique equals power), a human flaw so many other tragic classical heroes indulged in. His inability to swim is his nemesis. Advantaged by his corporality and physical virility, he manifests New Zealand guidelines of masculinity. To be such an almost-perfect specimen grants him a hegemonic position in the hierarchy of a gendered society, which is also an invisible position. He realises Fred's physical insufficiencies and hence reasons Fred's general incapability to deploy his body in any physical activity. He forgets that an activity like swimming has less to do with muscular virility than with skill and technique and in so is vulnerable to patronising instruction by his mate (in letting him drown). Cultural assumptions have seduced him to believe that physical activeness and strength equals masculinity and power. The celebration of muscular masculinity as national type sets the standard against which all other masculinities are measured. Fred incorporates subordinate masculinity and is thus by assumption deprived of specific aspects of masculinity, so for example the aspect of activeness and the active deployment of the body. Ken believes Fred, with his inferior body, is incapable of embodying activeness, such as swimming a certain distance. He is proven wrong.

Fred is an interesting character in the respect of being able to observe, judge and exploit his mate's hubris. In the first place, utilising the New Zealand concept of 'mateship' Fred secures his mate's complete assistance and support in matters of performing physical virility. Ken has no choice but to obey the protocol of mateship understood to serve as societal stabiliser with a long 'tradition' in New Zealand. In the second place, Fred flatters Ken's hubris by deliberately placing himself under his mate's control. The constant repetition of the adulating logic of "I am weak, you are strong, you can do it" invokes in Ken the wish to reaffirm his masculinity and dominant position through the opportune performance of physical might. Ken, a victim of New Zealand's gendered culture, would seize perhaps every opportunity to affirm that he indeed epitomises the New Zealand he-man. Finally, the space of the New Zealand fishing dinghy as a site of masculinity and safe homosociality triggers in Ken a deceiving sentiment of security and 'homeliness'. Fishing in this story is a performance: it is a stylised act, a model for negotiating masculinities and it is the repetition of the act (the story does not tell us whether the fishing trip is a singular event) that makes it 'safe' for Ken. The fishing dinghy as a naturalised site of cosy homosociality, where 'men can be men' and where hierarchies may be safely negotiated lulls Ken into a false sense of security. He feels no anxiety sitting in the dinghy even though the deep water all around means his demise. These three cultural assumptions and constructs facilitate the 'killing' of New Zealand hegemonic masculinity. The act of letting Ken drown is the performance of subversion and reveals the easiness with which the construction of the hegemonic Kiwi bloke may be undermined.

Ken's death is but an allegory of necessary challenge of accepted normative concepts and discourses and their seductive flaws. Ken and Fred are not simply two individuals on a fishing dinghy but two very different manifestations of New Zealand masculinities where one proves capable of outdoing the other through cleverly deploying New Zealand cultural concepts and values as bait. Ken illustrates the fragility of the culturally false syllogism that a mighty physique equals power

and potency. Fred shows how a culturally subaltern physique may subvert power relations; power relations that were thought to be axiomatic and natural.

I would like to end this chapter with another quote from Wells underlining Sargeson's achievement that cannot be overemphasised really:

Sargeson is so fascinating a writer because he occupied such a key role in the formation of modern New Zealand literature, and one of his accomplishments was in breaking through this code of silence, and in exploring the nature of 'mateship's' literal and metaphorical language. One understands a lot about Sargeson once one grasps that he took the language of his working class lover, Harry, [...] and parlayed the equivocating jokiness, the straightforward story with many a convoluted twist, into first class literature which comments on male relations, existence. And at the same time he visualised or created a specific New Zealandness out of language, and *through* language. This was his triumph. (WELLS 1997: 18)

## **2.2 EPIC FAIL!: "THE ISLAND" (1985)**

The late nineteenth century celebrated popularised images of early pioneering men (among men) and their struggle with nature. These pioneering men ('where men could be men once more') roamed the countryside, explored the wilderness in their search for labour that was then mostly carried out in isolated conditions. Many of these single men were incorporated into farms, timber mills, mining works, where they lived in camps packed together with no or only little contact to the opposite sex facilitating the culture of homosociality and defining the concept of mateship. They enjoyed relative independence since they had no dependents to look after, cherished hard physical work, self-reliance and -sufficiency and, apparently, stoicism and laconicism. (cf. JAMES & SAVILLE-SMITH 1989; KING 2003; FOX 2009) The popularised image was further mythologised by and culminated in John Mulgan's novel *Man Alone*, published in the same year World War II broke out. The

character of Johnson is the personification of the creation of the Man Alone and set the standard for all fictional (and perhaps the excuse for the behaviour of nonfictional) Men Alone that would follow in the course of the twentieth century.

“When Johnson returns to the outside world, it is as a creature of a new a different species. His power to form social ties, his desire for a normal routine, have been sterilized; and from thenceforward he remains always in some degree an outlaw” (BAXTER 1949: 375). The incapability of social bonding especially with women, the craving for solitude, being surrounded only by nature – in the most sociable case the Man Alone would have a female dog as companion – all made up features of the narrative of the Man Alone. In many ways, masculinities in New Zealand short stories try to approximate to the concept of the Man Alone by incorporating bits and pieces of characteristics in order to become part of the myth.

Popularly, the Man Alone has been rendered an anachronism in modern times. Barry Crump with his three novels *A Good Keen Man*, *Hang On a Minute Mate* and *Crocodile Country*, all published in the early 1960s, took the image to such extremes that nowadays, the novels are relocated in the humour section of New Zealand bookshops.

The 1980s proved to be a decade of reinterpretation for the Man Alone: In 1985, Graeme Lay published his short story “The Island” tackling and satirising the myth of the Man Alone demystifying many celebrated features of the persona. The story has been reprinted several times, most recently in 2004. Its continuous popularity expresses its persistent topicality. Three years later in 1988, Peter Stewart’s story “A Bitch Called Fly” invokes once more the nostalgia of the Man Alone. The story has not been reprinted since. The decision of the reading public is clear: The pioneering Man Alone is totally *out*.

Graeme Lay's "The Island" starts with the protagonist "he" fishing solitarily in his rocking dinghy (we recall the discussion of fishing (and) dinghies in the previous chapter). We learn that he is not looking forward to row back to antagonistic "her" and "the boy"; he would rather avoid discussions like:

'Why don't you speak?'  
'There's nothing to say.'  
'Nothing? Don't you feel anything for us?'  
'I don't know. I don't know what I feel any more. Can't you leave me alone, just leave me alone? Is that too much to ask?' (LAY 2004: 70-1)

He has nothing to say, so the aspect of laconicism is applied. He is clearly uncomfortable with the idea of becoming a Family Man, of accepting new responsibilities, when all he wants is to be independent (from the antagonist "her"), a man "alone".

She seemed to be walling him up, bricking in his life so that he'd almost ceased to exist as a separate being. And the more she clung to him, the more he wanted to go. Only when he was out here in the boat was he free, and the freedom was so good that the temptation to leave altogether was becoming stronger. She could not, perhaps would not see what he needed, a life of his own. [...] She could have the bach, the boat, what furniture there was. Leaving all of it would be part of the freedom he would be exchanging it for. (LAY 2004: 71)

We are not provided much background information about the nature of the relationship between the two characters. Perhaps she demands of him to take on more his role as provider. She wants him to care more about her and her son. She wants a Family Man. He, in the contrary, wants to be on his own. He wants to lead the life of a Man Alone, without a woman, without responsibilities, free to go as he pleases. The only space he feels free, where he feels a 'man' is when he is in his boat. The boat as typical site of the Man Alone naturally appeals to him and his sojourn in the dinghy gives him a taste of what being a Man Alone could be like. He would leave everything behind, even the dinghy, to take what is so 'naturally' his and has been occupied by "her".



He hauls the anchor, causing the dinghy to lurch, himself to tumble and an oar to break off one of the rowlocks. But being all the self-reliant DIY man, he tries to improvise and tinker together a rough-and-ready rowlock. Unfortunate for our protagonist, his first reenactment of the self-sufficiency of the Man Alone fails: "What a simple device a rowlock was. Simple, and essential. The ones he had made with the nylon line had lasted only a few strokes of the oars each time before the friction snapped them" (LAY 2004: 71-2). A Man Alone could have fixed it, for he can fix anything in MacGyver-esque manner. Not discouraged by his broken rowlock and his inability to fix it though, the protagonist continues rowing against the tide with only one oar to reach the beach – an arduous cue that unconsciously evokes in him in Proustian manner (through the story device of 'involuntary memory') recollections of his days in the army:

He could smell the reek of his own sweat and feel the rawness where the life-jacket had chaffed his armpits. He opened his palms. His hands were sore, very sore, the skin burning. He sat up, flexing his arms slowly. Trying to row with one oar against the tide was like one of those fiendish punishments he remembered from his army days, like polishing a barbed wire fence, or scrubbing the barracks floor with a tooth brush. (LAY 2004: 71)

The man's failure to improvise a rowlock forces him to take on a task that triggers memories of militant days. The recollection of the army however, does not conform to expected 'national' narrations. The mere act of recalling days in the army is demystified since it does not involve memories of heroic victories or tragic defeats but mundane army bullying and acts of punishment. Also, the fact that he is wearing a life-jacket differentiates his Man Alone heroism: Precaution is not associated with men roaming the wilderness; and the dinghy as masculine space has not seen a life-jacket before, either. Our man is not much of a 'man' in accordance with the concept of the Man Alone.

The man realises the tide is taking him towards the island rather than back to the beach. He knows that there is an information centre on the island and a jetty. From there will he make his way home. On the weekends, he would have easily been picked up by a passing yacht, but on weekdays he is alone. In fact, he is in the state of solitude that he fantasised about just a few moments earlier. The island is an extinct volcano and he has to cross the shore's belt of scoria to reach the alleged road that convicts built around the island that would lead him to the jetty. He leaves everything back in the dinghy and as he steps out on the island, he experiences a pioneering sentiment of terra nullius:

The landscape was the weirdest he had ever seen. [...] It was a strange empty place, like something from a science fiction film, windless and silent, and he suddenly felt very conscious of his solitude, as if he had stepped very far back or forward in time, and taken no one with him. (LAY 2004: 72-3)

Following in the footsteps of his Men Alone ancestors, he sets out to explore the island. The past is as mythical as the future and he senses his reclusion. His initial explorer's awe soon gives way to the banal reality of the situation:

The rocks were a bloody inconvenient size, he concluded ruefully, too big to walk over, not big enough to jump on. His movements became a painful compromise as every step forward tenderised his soles a little more, so that after a few minutes he could make only a series of slow, awkward steps. (LAY 2004: 73)

There he is, the exploring masculinity hobbling and trudging barefoot into the unknown. Even the mere act of walking is not the perceived heroic stride with head held high. Through the protagonist's performance of the concept of the Man Alone and his subsequent failure ("the rocks were a bloody inconvenient size"), the concept of the Man Alone is demythologised. The speech pattern of Kiwi lingo ("bloody") also breaks with the heroic tone of a myth. When the protagonist decides to take a leap over a fissure in the scoria he hurts himself badly but limps on in search of that convict road. He notices the huge number of gull nesting in the

black scoria and ponders: "He should have brought the sack of fish, diverted them with that. He should have done lots of things. Not lost the rowlock, brought sneakers, not fallen on the scoria" (LAY 2004: 74). As he stumbles his way through the scoria speckled with gull fledglings the females start to get angry:

He stared up at the sky. Arr! Arr! He couldn't count the black-backed sentinels now, there were too many, and they were changing direction too quickly, the smaller females rising in angry, shrieking hordes as he approached their young, their cries berating him as he stumbled across the nesting ground. [...] And the cries of the birds were deafening, and so close. (LAY 2004: 74-5)

He begins to pace up, leaving behind a bloody trace caused by broken skin of his soles. The salt sweat running into his eyes obstructs his vision and he steps on something soft: "For an instant the ball of down cushioned his right foot, then he felt the softness yield and heard its strangled cry. He lifted his foot and looked down to see the chick's small wings rising and falling feebly as it tried to move its crushed body" (LAY 2004: 75). Hitchcock-reminiscent hell breaks loose:

And at the same moment two of the black shapes above plummeted, backs arched, legs dangling, backstaying with their wings as their beaks thrust at his face.

He lifted his arms to protect his eyes from the flashing beaks, then spun round, keeping his eyes shut hard as the wings beat about his head and shoulders. He felt a stab in his scalp as a beak found its target, and with the pain of the wound came a sudden, blinding anger. He whirled his arms about, striking one of the soft white bodies with a clenched fist, screaming obscenity after obscenity. He was a man, how dare these creatures attack him! (LAY 2004: 75)

Akin to Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, the female gulls on the island attack the man and stab at his body. His shock at being attacked results in anger. He swears and marvels at the improbability of the situation. Expectations and protocols of the myth of the Man Alone do not state the probability of being attacked by birds. The unexpected turn in the myth seems absurd: "He was a man, how dare these creatures attack him!" The Island becomes the antagonist in the story: it features a

well-established nature-versus-man plot. The mythological Man Alone however masters nature, roams the wilderness, climbs mountains. In this story, nature wins over man and demythologises the concept of the Man Alone.

The protagonist staggers forward, the birds still slashing his skin in his face, neck and scalp. He notices a roaring noise:

[T]he roaring was getting stronger, stronger and louder. An engine noise, a dull mechanical drone. Then it stopped, abruptly, and he could hear his own breathing, louder than the fading cries of the birds. He began to rub at his eyes, and as he did so he heard a metallic crash, and the crunch of boots on the gravel. He tried to lift his head, but he could only turn it to one side. A voice.

'Hey, mate, are you all right?'

He couldn't speak, but realised he was lying on flat ground. Hands slid under his arms, and he felt himself being turned over, heard the sibilant sound of a breath drawn quickly inward.

'Jesus ...' A pause. 'You'll be okay, You'll be okay.'

A handkerchief, dabbing at his eyes.

'Ted Deane, Park Ranger. I was taking the truck round to the jetty to pick up my groceries. Don't move, don't move. I'll get some water from the truck.' (LAY 2004: 76)

Civilisation in an alleged terra nullius saves the potential Man Alone's life. The ranger by his presence demystifies the landscape and the country as un-colonised. The island emerges not as terra nullius but as a guarded bird sanctuary, an area protected from human influence and civilisation. The appearance of the ranger stresses the anachronism of the myth and satirises further the protagonist's intention of adhering to the concept: the pioneering Man Alone in a terra nullius can no longer exist – the country has been explored, mapped and claimed and the concept has been declared obsolete.

The protagonist strives for his independence and freedom but he cannot even return home safely from his fishing trip. His improvisation of a rowlock breaks apart, so does his identity. He walks barefoot onto the rugged scoria of the island, slash-

ing his soles and getting himself hurt by falling. He steps on a fledgling thus contracting the female birds' anger and revenge. Only civilisation is able to rescue him from being hacked to unconsciousness and perhaps left to bleed to death. The protagonist manifests an identity I will boldly call 'Man Alone Failure masculinity'. It is clear that everything he attempts is an endeavour to make himself recognisable (also to himself) as a Man Alone. But he fails in everything, falls short of expectations and the desired objective that the Man Alone identity entails. His doings are characterised by their failure and his narrative is a list of unsuccessful endeavours. He is not fixing the rowlock, not roaming the country, not mastering nature. He is not self-reliant, does not cherish hard labour and obviously cannot survive in isolation. He attempts stylised repetitions of acts, endeavours in reiterations of masculine norms but he fails, thus repeatedly manifesting 'Man Alone Failure masculinity'.

### ***2.3 IN LOVE WITH THE GROTESQUE BODY: "MAN WITH TWO ARMS" (1991)***

It is really depressing! It's really New Zealand! (BILBROUGH: Interview February 17, 2009)

Born in 1941, Norman Bilbrough fully lived the impact of second-wave feminism and the hippie-movement in New Zealand. In the interview that I conducted, he said about himself that he was "growing up in New Zealand as men lost their power – the old way of acting that is no longer effective" (Interview February 2009). Although he grew up quite typically for a New Zealand boy of his time in a male-only environment, he was aware of the cataclysms that the rise of feminism brought about and the effect it had on the behaviour/behavioural patterns of men. Most of his stories are told from a female point of view, as he explains:

I perhaps [convey] the slightly more feminine aspect of the New Zealand psyche. I do. Not so popular, but yes I do. [...] I find women more interesting than men. [...] I had a few girlfriends but that's all I had, no sisters, and I went to a boys' boarding school in the 1950s, and then I

went to an agricultural college and then I went to University at Victoria. I dropped out of all of these places. I ended up being a bohemian. When I went to university in the late 50s early 60s, for every ten men there was one woman. Women were in the background. Then I married a mad woman. And I had a number of relationships since. I enjoy women far more; I am a fairly emotional man. I am more interested in exploring emotion than perhaps action. That leads me more to the feminine side. (Interview February 2009)

The fact that Norman Bilbrough is interested in “exploring emotion” more than “action” and feels unable to convey his emotional landscape through a male perspective and narrative, is significant. He confirms the association of action, activity and activeness with masculinity in New Zealand. He goes on dismissing New Zealand masculinity in his life that also informed his writing: “I wasn’t very much interested in the typical Kiwi. I am not a typical Kiwi. He’s been down to death” (Interview February 2009). To digress from traditional manifestations Bilbrough adopted an identity/a behaviour that allowed him to live in deviance: He became a bohemian and a feminist. He chose to get in touch with what he and his cultural background consider the “feminine side”. Bilbrough cannot express himself satisfactorily within the realms of New Zealand masculinity; his protagonists struggle (perhaps like their creator) with their insufficiencies and reluctance to perform what society accepts as masculine. “Writers are sometimes not very articulate” (Interview February 2009), Bilbrough curiously says about male authors as if it were a pathetic truth. Bilbrough does not squander his authorial energy on deconstructing the New Zealand hegemonic male but primarily occupies himself with juxtaposing hegemonic male specimens with the males reluctant and in-potent to integrate within this discourse. Many of his troubled males that have made it into collections of short stories have not ceased to provide alternative views on New Zealand masculinities.

The thread that connects most of his stories is the depiction of his male protagonists: They all feature deficiencies and inability to perform according to society’s expected protocol. Bilbrough calls his generation a generation of “emotional cripples” (Interview February 2009). I asked Bilbrough the same question that I posed

to Owen Marshall: Why do you frequently let your characters die? Is your intention to convey an image of New Zealand depression?: “It is really depressing! It is really New Zealand!” Bilbrough answered (Interview February 2009). What he perhaps means is: It is really depressing and frustrating *for men* in New Zealand.

I have chosen Bilbrough’s long short story “Man with Two Arms” for this chapter on ‘Breaking Tradition’ because it reveals three different positions of masculinity in the gender hierarchy. The story centres on a man with only one arm and praises the sanity of this man’s actions even though his body is grotesque and positions him at the bottom of the hierarchy. The story is not only long page-wise but it also covers a long time lapse from the female protagonist’s youth until her death.

In my interview, Bilbrough talked about his inspiration for the story:

I once had an acquaintance who was a teacher and she was married to a man who had only one arm. She said to me one day: ‘I long to have two arms around me.’ The man who had one arm, her husband, was a really sensitive man. You could tell he had a really hard time in this society. (Interview February 2009)

“Man with Two Arms” is told through the perspective of a woman; a perspective located outside of hegemonic discourses of masculinity but well within their influence. It is also the only short story in this thesis that has a female protagonist through whose eyes we learn the events. It is the female eyes that fall in love with the least societally desired manifestation of masculinity: the physically “grotesque” man.

The story’s female protagonist is Martha, and the year is 1939. World War II sends young New Zealand men away to Europe and the Pacific and Martha takes over position in a post office. After the war, Martha is desirous of studying but returning

men fill up the universities so that she decides to attend a teacher's training college. "[S]he was part of a group of country girls. Men belonged to a foreign country. Their banter amazed her. They were so cruel to each other" (BILBROUGH 1991: 2). Martha depicts the discourse of 'manliness' in post-war New Zealand as cruel banter happening mainly among men and not between men and women. Martha states that men inhabited a different realm, a "foreign country". Masculinity is fought out within male-only situations; this is still a remainder of the pioneering days when men were horded together in working camps and when their contact to the other sex was rare. Masculine identity was established in opposition to other masculinities and not femininity. The situation during World War II was not any different: in a male-only situation masculinities were established and negotiated against each other.

In the story, the teacher's training college, it seems, is but a microcosm of New Zealand society at the time. Martha meets a "thin young man" who is not so "scornful" (BILBROUGH 1991: 2). It is his weedy physique that positions him in subordination. This is also the reason that he is not as scornful as the others; the 'others' being physically mighty New Zealand blokes. The thin man called Donald McDonald is inferior because his body does not show the desired 'manliness' of New Zealand society. He is the only man Martha "had really noticed"; she finds his deviance from the hegemonic male 'big' body interesting. As compensatory performance for his deficiencies in corporal hegemony Donald exerts his temper. He has "rages" (BILBROUGH 1991: 3) when Martha disagrees with him, in so reinstituting his masculinity by exerting aggression over femininity and compensating for the lack of desired traits of masculinity. Exercising power over Martha guarantees his superior position in opposition to femininity but does not grant him a ruling position among other masculinities. They are both posted to different schools and their contact is limited to letters and writing. Martha forgets his temper and when they next meet, Donald proposes to her. She asks for more time to think about it and they part. It is



a New Zealand bloke named Jock that convinces her that Donald might be the lesser of two evils:

She was teaching with a big bluff man named Jock Burton. During the war he had commanded motor torpedo boats in the Pacific. He loved his cricket and rugby. He was not married; it was rumoured that he had affairs with women. He was easy to talk to, and Martha enjoyed his jokes. One day he said, 'How about a drive to Nelson on Saturday? We could get a bit of tucker and go to the pictures.'  
Martha reddened. 'I can't. I'm sorry, Jock.'  
Several weeks later, he tried again.  
'I'm going with another man,' Martha explained. He gave a grunt of surprise. 'He's teaching up north.'  
Later she felt she had missed out on something casual, yet vital. But life for Jock Burton was too easy. Martha suspected that life was difficult – certainly thoughtful. (BILBROUGH 1991: 5)

Jock Burton is the epitome of the traditional Kiwi bloke. He played a dominant role in the war as a commander, has an impressive physique, and loves his sports. He is also most popular with women, a situation he apparently enjoys. As a Kiwi bloke, he breezes through life; society favours his physique, his style and his behaviour and smoothes his way. Martha finds this suspicious. She decides to marry Donald, the one that knows what struggling means. Once married, they move to Levin where Donald has a new teaching job. When Martha thinks about going back into teaching too, Donald's reaction is patriarchal:

'You were going to stay at home and have a baby,' Donald said.  
'I'm not pregnant yet.'  
'*Everybody's* having a family.' [...]  
Martha felt obscurely guilty. (BILBROUGH 1991: 6)

Donald believes in the strict gender-separated reality of New Zealand post-war society: Martha is supposed to stay at home and have a baby and the husband's responsibility is subsumed in the role of the breadwinner. Perhaps again as a compensation for his subordinate masculinity, he takes his role as Family Man and patriarch over-earnestly. Donald strides to achieve a more powerful position in society and Martha with her reproductive function could provide him with an aspect of

a desired form of masculinity (the Family Man). Societal conventions and pressures cause Martha to feel guilty about not conforming to her role as family mother.

Still, Martha is not unhappy with her choice of husband: Donald is educated (enough) and “the thought of being spinster was a horror to her” (BILBROUGH 1991: 7). Martha is bound to the cultural hour of the post-war baby-boomers and cannot imagine a life that the state has spent much effort on depicting as undesirable. As it happens, Martha gets pregnant:

‘We’ll call him Peter,’ Donald decided.  
What if it’s a girl?’  
‘I don’t know any girl’s names.’  
‘But you *teach* girls.’  
‘None of their names appeal to me.’  
Martha suspected that if he offered a girl’s name, he was scared a girl might appear.  
A girl *did* appear. Martha called her Elaine.  
‘It’s very nice,’ Donald said at the nursing home.  
‘She’s lovely,’ Martha corrected. (BILBROUGH 1991: 7)

Donald wishes for a boy – not surprising in a society with power relations that favour males – and when he gets a daughter, he refers to her as “it” and “nice”. A few years later, Donald demands another child on the premise that they “could have a boy this time” (BILBROUGH 1991: 9). But much to Donald’s disappointment, Martha gives birth to another daughter. He again refuses to think of a name for his daughter as girls’ names are “women’s territory” (BILBROUGH 1991: 10). He does not even participate in the nurturing of the girls; he insists on the gender separation. Very much unfettered by the logic of a growing capitalist culture and less because of his responsibility as breadwinner, Donald wants to move away to get a first assistant’s job: “‘I want a better job with more money so that we can lead a better life’” (BILBROUGH 1991: 10-1). Even though Martha and the girls are happy, they move with the man of the family in order to follow the logic capitalist trail of better job – more money – better life. A few years later they move again and Martha misses her

friends. She is doing some gardening when Sally Buckland turns up for the first time:

‘I’m Mrs. Buckland.’ The woman offered a big hungry hand. Martha struggled with her gardening glove. ‘You can call me Sally.’ Never would Martha call this woman Sally. ‘Your husband fixed my bike for me.’ ‘Did he?’ Martha said. [...] Martha could not remember Donald coming home with oily hands. Perhaps he washed them in Sally Buckland’s bathroom. ‘He speaks so nice.’ There was longing in Sally Buckland’s voice. (BILBROUGH 1991: 11-2)

Martha reasons that Donald has an affair with Sally Buckland. In the evening, Martha enquires about Sally:

‘I met the woman down the street.’  
‘What woman?’ Donald knew who it was.  
‘You fixed her chain.’  
‘Oh. Her.’  
‘Is she divorced?’  
‘There’s a little man in there.’ Donald was off-hand. [...] ‘What sort of little man?’  
‘Just a little man. He does a paper round.’  
‘Men don’t do paper rounds.’  
‘That’s what I mean,’ Donald said. ‘He’s only got one good arm.’ (BILBROUGH 1991: 12)

Donald’s denomination of Sally’s husband as “a little man” alludes to an assumption of social subordination and reduced masculinity. It is interesting to see the change in Donald: although his physique forces him into a subordinate position within the hierarchy of masculinities, his temper, his education and ‘the money’ provide him with the bit of economic independence and power he desires to almost *make it* into a dominant position. Sally Buckland’s little man however, is clearly inferior to Donald’s position of power since he is not only physically unattractive by givens standards, he does not even have a job to compensate for his bodily impediment. Allegedly, the little man only has one good arm and it is the visibility of his physical invalidity that also hinders him to engage in compensatory action through for example the acquisition of money, executive positions and other

ways of establishing power. He does paper rounds. Martha's disbelief bolsters again the genderedness of New Zealand society in which there are clear assumptions as to what occupation is associated with masculinity and which ones with non-masculinity or femininity. Positions associated with non-masculinity are generally paid less and are filled with lower-class men, women and adolescents. Doing paper rounds belongs in this category. Obviously then, Sally Buckland's little man is in his behaviour non-masculine and hence belittled in his 'manliness'.

When Martha meets Sally Buckland again, her husband is with her. After praising Donald's intelligence and learnedness ("All those big words he uses" (BILBROUGH 1991: 13)) Sally Buckland introduces to Martha "a small man a step behind" (BILBROUGH 1991: 13):

Sally Buckland grabbed the man.

'This is my husband Les.'

Les swallowed and nodded.

'He's got a crook arm.' Sally Buckland pumped his good arm up and down. The other remained awkwardly at his side. 'A disease when he was a kiddie.'

Les turned pink. He had the most beautiful eyes Martha had seen. (BILBROUGH 1991: 13)

Sally exhibits her husband; she performs his impairment, his 'grotesqueness' by pumping his healthy arm whereas the unhealthy one remains still. Sally pumps Les' arm up and down, bestowing activeness on the healthy body parts and stressing the passiveness of Les' deformed body part. Right after telling his name she adds that he has a crook arm, as if the bodily deformity *made* Les' essence. Sally bestows upon her husband a personality reasoned through his grotesque body. Les' integrity is measured entirely via his crooked arm.

By mentioning the notion of the 'grotesque body' I refer to David Morgan's account on Men's body types. He illustrates a difference in class between the classical and the grotesque body in Western contexts:

[W]ith some simplification, classical bodies are controlled, in conformity with dominant (in this case European, Western?) aesthetic standards [...]. In contrast, the grotesque body is uncontrolled, unappealing according to dominant aesthetic standards [...]. In the face of the disciplines of capitalism and bureaucracy, the classical body becomes the rational body but the grotesque body still, at least symbolically, tends to be associated with the working or the lower classes. (MORGAN 1993: 81-2)

David Morgan defines the grotesque body as a social body carrying class presumptions; society decides which body is the attractive one, the classical body, and which one is appalling, the grotesque body. In a society like New Zealand which puts great emphasis on corporality, the grotesque body will also serve as identitarian recognition: If one has the body of a rugby player – he is indeed a man. If one does not have the body of a rugby player, but can still serve the nation with manual work or skills – he may one day make it to power in this society. If one does not even have the necessary set of corporal pairs (two legs, two arms, two eyes) to have a complete value in the system – he will never reach the desired position of power. Naturalising forces push the grotesque body down to societal lower ranks, into jobs associated with the lower class: In the story, Les is physically deviant from the accepted physical ideal; he is not a *whole* being as such. With only one functioning arm he can serve the state, the nation, the society and their expectations only half as well as a healthy man can equipped with two arms. He is no full member of society. His physical inadequacy results in his expulsion from hegemonic forces in power as they are the ones determining what is adequate, acceptable and desired. The invigilation of what is adequate and desirable is executed by members within the male hierarchy. Les is missing one arm to do what is expected and is thus treated as a minor being by another man (Donald), as an unpleasant deviance that is only able to work in realms reserved for unfinished and incom-

plete members of society: boys and women. Les allegedly does the paper round – an occupation that does not boost, promote or is associated with manliness. Men do not do the paper round; it is boys who do it, adolescents. Les is made into and thus recognised as an emasculated being; his crooked arm (and his job) keeps him from being recognised as a full grown man: Donald sees Les as a lesser man because he does paper rounds (resulting from his ‘deformity’); Sally takes her husband as a lesser man (less than Donald) because he has a crooked arm and is thus unable to *perform* manly duties:

Sally discloses to Martha: “‘You know what I’d like someday? [...] Two whole arms to hold me in bed’” (BILBROUGH 1991: 15). Les’ grotesque body is not only insufficient by society’s standards but also by expectation of sexual performance. His crook arm strips him of masculinity and the desired potency to hold Sally in bed with two arms – to give her *full* satisfaction. Donald interrupts the women’s discussion and Sally Buckland rejoices:

‘We were just talking about you!’

‘We weren’t,’ Martha said.

‘We were talking about *men*.’ (BILBROUGH 1991: 15)

Sally reaffirms her perception of Donald’s masculinity: The subject of discussion was *men* and Donald apparently fits into this category according to her idea of what a man is. Simultaneously, Sally emasculates her own husband by juxtaposing him with Donald. Les, the not-man is incapable of satisfying his wife sexually because he lacks two healthy arms, an advantage that Donald the man has over Les. Sally continues noticing and consolidating Donald’s masculinity by repeatedly adoring his learnedness, his well-paid and distinguished job as a teacher and his (not hegemonic but better than Les) physical fitness – they are all characteristics she associates with ‘manliness’ and finds wanting in her husband.

Days later, Martha fortuitously meets Les on her way to town. She is surprised to see that he can drive a car and is relieved to hear that in fact, it is not him doing the paper rounds after all, it is an adolescent boy. Rumour has even managed to push him further down the social hierarchy than is really the case. Martha falls in love with the sensitive and imperfect man:

He smiled again, with his strange imbecilic purity. Except he was not an imbecile. He had a quickening effect on Martha. It might have been his thin shoulders or small boyish head. She felt bemused, even alarmed [...] to feel like this for a strange man ... [...] She dreamt about Les. He held her close with his imperfect arm. (BILBROUGH 1991: 15-6)

Akin to Sally Buckland, who wishes to have *two arms* to hold her in bed (a.k.a. Donald), Martha desires Les to comfort her with his imperfection. Martha stresses his physical deviance, his grotesqueness that attracts her to him. When she was much younger, Donald's deviance has attracted her away from blokes like Jock Burton. Now, in light of Donald's position of power in opposition to Les, she senses the latter's appealing effect on her. For Martha, the further her desire moves down in the three-step hierarchy of masculinities in the story world, the more honest and true her love is.

Les vanishes and when Martha learns that he is sick, she visits him in his house where his family lives in poverty. But, Martha ponders, he is "poor and serene" (BILBROUGH 1991: 18), something, she realises, she has never seen before in her life. Donald, the Family Man, and his desire to advance in job, money, prestige has provided her with some comfort, too. Back home, her daughter passes through the kitchen and stops:

'What's wrong, Mum?' she tried to look into Martha's face. I'm in love with a man who's not your father, Martha was thinking. But she said, 'Nothing.' [...] She decided she must not see Les again. The thought of him was upsetting her life. *He has filled my heart up with himself.*

Then she was shocked, for her heart must have been empty, previously.  
(BILBROUGH 1991: 18)

Martha realises that for the first time in her life, she really loves a man. She loves him because of his grotesque body and because of what this body has done with his integrity and his role in society. Martha is in love with the inchoate man and recognises the emotional crippledness of manifestations of dominant masculinity. In the beginning, we understood that Martha was suspicious of life being too easy, and who else could then epitomise difficulty and prudence more than first the thin man Donald and then the grotesque man Les. Amidst her emotional turmoil, Martha's visit to the gynaecologist ends with the sad news that her ovaries have to be removed and that she will not have any more children. Martha is devastated and can only think of one person who could possibly understand her misery:

She wanted to see Les. She wanted to sit near him even in that shabby kitchen, or be driven through the quiet streets in his van. He would understand her; he had spent a lifetime considering desolation. [...] I could ring Les and he would collect me, she thought. He would do anything for her – except live with her, and be her lost lover ... (BILBROUGH 1991: 19)

Only the grotesque man can provide solace to Martha. Only a man stuck in a grotesque body can understand what it means to be stripped of physical signs of sexual identity. Les lacks the arm; Martha loses her ovaries, the biological epitome of femininity. She feels robbed of her sexual identity and Les might be the only person in her whole environment that could be sympathetic with these sentiments, whereas her husband's reaction bolsters the strictly gendered spaces of life:

'They're going to cut out my ovaries.'  
Zoe howled.

'Oh, my God!' Donald said. But Martha wondered if he was sincere. Her ovaries were removed. Two months later she was able to move without pain. And whenever there was a question about her – for she was not often seen – Donald would say she had women's troubles. (BILBROUGH 1991: 19)



Donald hold on to the rigorous separation of male and female arenas. He dismisses Martha's painful operation as "women's troubles". He cannot understand that a removal of the ovaries is an invasion in Martha's femininity. Ovaries are a part of the female body, thus female terrain, therefore in opposition to the male body and the male space where masculinity is enacted. Yet again, it is the first two levels in the hierarchy that reinforce gender separation and in so shape and recreate society.

Donald and the girls move away, once more allowing for Donald's promotion in his job. Martha will never see Les again – the only person she believed could be empathic and understanding of her desolation.

Three understandings of New Zealand masculinity clash in this story: The able-bodied rugby brute Jock, the patriarchal almost-hegemonic Donald, who needs to compensate for his fears to not perform adequately (and succeeds in doing so), and Les, the grotesque masculinity whose unattractive body gives way to emotional depth that the other two models are deprived of.

Jock Burton epitomises the 'traditional' able-bodied rugby, World War II hegemonic New Zealand masculinity. Even though society recognises him as the desirable manifestation of what it means to be a 'man', the female protagonist finds his success and effortlessness suspicious. His epitomisation of hegemonic masculine New Zealandness renders his life a breeze and secures his success in the female and the male worlds.

Along comes Donald, the thin man: in order to overcome his own physical deficiencies, carrying inside him also the national shock post-World War II, he compensates with several performances: He repeatedly plays out his temper as an act of

domination, rendering himself the patriarch of the family and stabilising his gender dominance. (Un)blessed with two daughters and not granted a son he assumes his position as head of the family and acts his dominance out by taking decisions that involve the whole family alone without even consulting his wife. He considers the work space to be his very own space, a masculine space, shutting the female family members out. He needs promotion in his job to compensate for other societal failures, such as his physical inferiority and not being able to produce sons. Donald defines himself through his job: the higher the position, the more the money, the bigger and newer the car and the house, the more of a 'man' he feels. He uses his job situation and everything that is connected to it to function as compensatory actions in an attempt to establish a masculinity that is accepted within society as adequately masculine. In light of Les' deficiencies, Donald is closer to the requirements of and expectations bestowed upon a certain form of accepted masculinity. He performs his learnedness by using "difficult" words, he strives to excel in his job, and first and foremost, his body – his visible vehicle of masculinity – is *whole*. Of the three discourses of masculinities in the story, Donald takes in the middle field. He has (the chance) to make up for his deficiencies by repeated compensation and compensatory acts. By reinforcing gender hierarchies (between and within genders) Donald reaches a desired position of power.

Les the 'grotesque' is situated on the far end of the New Zealand masculinity continuum. As a performance in Butlerian understanding is a stylised repetition of acts in order to convey a certain ideology or identity, it is difficult to detect stylised repetition in Les' demeanour. He does not perform his grotesque bodily space. It is his non-performance, his inability to engage in accepted stylised acts that are perceived as societal "shortcoming". Martha looks beyond Les' lacking integrity and soon learns to cherish his personality that is so different from Donald's. Les in the role of the expellee is not expected to perform according to a certain cultural protocol which subsequently grants him the freedom to explore emotional landscapes that 'traditional' masculinities are not associated with. He enjoys the freedom of

not having to live up to any expectations; he does not have to adhere to a certain 'style'. Les can practically move about without pondering about how he might perform accordingly – he does not have to 'perform' at all. He is unfettered of the cuffs of society's restraints. The cruelty of his situation lies in the plight that his crooked arm prevents him from holding down jobs where his disability is regarded as unacceptable hindrance to perform adequately. Donald as a superior 'variety' demonstrates society's craving for promotion (the capitalist logic of 'money is success is happiness') and procreation (of the male); Les' grotesqueness is denied such societal advancement.

Through the eyes of Martha, the first two discourses (rugby war bloke, compensatory weedy masculinity) are depicted deleterious and emotionally deprived whereas Les' reveals healthy sensitivity and understanding towards Martha. Les' 'societal impotence' and opportune emotional landscape caused by his grotesqueness are the reasons why Martha falls in love with him. The reader realises through Martha's biased perspective how conventional and craven Donald really is underneath his armour of affected masculinity. It is important that Bilbrough chose to write this story through the eyes of a woman because it reveals power struggles between the genders and within the genders of New Zealand society of that time. It is significant that Bilbrough considers the female perspective more apt and able to convey both the discourse of hegemonic masculinity and two alternative discourses. As readers we tend to identify with the protagonist, so our sympathy lies with Martha and her love for the grotesque male body that subsequently is rendered the body we as readers find desirable.

## 2.4 NEW ZEALAND'S EMANCIPATING SONS: "WEIGHT" (1999)

All the heroes are gone, son, else I would be one for you. (ARDAGH 1992/2006: 131)

Among the 'filial' generation of writers, Carl Nixon born in 1967 has excelled as multiple winner of short story competitions. His stories are traditionally masculinist – all of them told from a male perspective and focus particularly on growing up and adolescence and boyhood in New Zealand.

The short story "Weight", winner of the *Sunday Star Times* short story competition 1999 tells of a son's act of detachment, of dissociation of his father representing obsolete New Zealand masculinity based primarily on physical virility.

I have called this analysis "New Zealand's Emancipating Sons". What I understand by emancipation in this context is the obtaining of 'the right of self' of a certain disenfranchised subject. In "Weight" it is the son seeking his right of self, the right to choose his own path and course of life. The father is the instance, the authority that disenfranchises his son. The connection to the nation is very straight-forward: the father enacts 'traditional' narratives of masculinity, emphasising the athletic corporality as a signifier of masculinity. The son personifies the wish to break with this tradition and perform deviance. In this story, in order to recuperate his emancipation the son has to first align himself with the father in order to emancipate subsequently. 'Aligning' between father and son is obtained by initiation and rite: When Arnold Van Gennep speaks about initiation rites, he distinguishes between "physical puberty and maturity" (physical or sexual maturation) and "social puberty and maturity". He notes that generally there "are rites of separation from the asexual world, and they are followed by rites of incorporation into the world of sexuality, and, in all societies and all social groups, into a group confined to persons of one sex or the other" (VAN GENNEP 1960: 67). The initiation is often a "sign

of union” with a new group. I would like to argue that in fact the son’s endeavours are less about an *admission* to a certain age group or secret society than rather the *demission* of them. The “magico-religious ‘fraternities’” (VAN GENNEP 1960: 76) that are essentially based on social kinship is what the son is born into. By physical virility and rugby action he has bolstered his place in this fraternity. His initiation is hoped to be the possible break with the past and future spells that bind him to this specific group.

The title of the story “Weight” alludes to the physicality (and thus masculinity) that plays a central role as determinant whether the initiation is successful or not. The characters of father and son remain nameless. Their namelessness consolidates their allegorical value as manifestations of specific generations and entities and lifts the importance of their individual fates. They are referred to throughout the story as “the father” and “the son”. The single-scene story takes place in the weight room. This space as a site of physical exercise and training is perhaps one of the most basic site for negotiations of New Zealand masculinity: One may train the body to approximate a certain favoured body type; one may mould the body in such to fill up the required space of the masculine body (make it ‘bigger’). It is also a space where less ‘manly’ bodies are reminded of their own deficiencies through the presence of hegemonic bodies and they might be visually inspired as to how far they may take their bodies. Doing weights in terms of metrology (be it kilograms or pounds) also conveys the illusion of objectivity; it makes one believe that strength is measurable. So quite clearly, the weight room reveals who the ‘manliest’ man is and who the least manly. The weight room is such a highly gendered space because the *actions* of men and women, their goals, are generally speaking oppositional: Men are trying to bulk up whereas women are narrowing their space (subsequently transforming the cardio into a feminine space). The motivations are similar though: Both want to mould their body to approximate as closely as possible to a received body type conforming to the current discourse of beauty and attractiveness and thus, power.

In the story, the father and the son work out, doing weights together in the garage that has been rendered a masculine space, a site where masculinity is negotiated. They are clad in similarly looking sports clothes and refrain from talking. They are stretching and warming up in harmonic unison. The son is still in a strop about a dispute they had over dinner: "He felt that he was old enough now to disagree with his father without being told he was talking back. He had decided that next year he would go flatting, leaving home for good" (NIXON 2006: 70). The eighteen-year old son starts to detach himself from his father.

Father and son start bench-pressing. The son's turn is first and the father positions himself behind his son "ready to life the weight off should his son fail" (NIXON 2006: 72). The father still sees himself in the role of mentor and protector. The son is reminded of his early youth when his father taught him how to breathe and when he was still dependent on his father's support and strong arm to help him out with the weights. It was summer then and winter now. The father lifts more slowly than his son. They put on more weight and it is the son's turn again. "His father did not have to help for the final two as he has sometimes done in the past" (NIXON 2006: 73). The son has grown stronger; he is in transition. He is not depending on his father's support anymore. The latter enquires about the son's rugby training:

His father changed position, bending sideways from the waist, pushing down with his hand toward his bare ankle. 'How was training?'  
His son waited before replying. 'Mr Newton is talking about trying me out at lock. Says I'm getting too big to stay a flanker.'  
'What does big matter? You're still fast.'  
'Yeah, but no one else is as tall. We need someone tall at lock.'  
His father grunted. (NIXON 2006: 70-1)

As the story reveals, even among the most desired masculinities, rugby players, there is a hierarchy determining who is the most desired among them – the forwards and the dynamic positions being generally considered more 'manly' than the backs and the more static positions. The position of the flanker is a forward dynamic and powerful position that has few responsibilities. The lock is almost al-

ways the tallest player and is in the second row of the scrummage (game situation where eight players of each team push against each other over ball possession). The position of the lock in the scrum is with their head slid between two players of the first row on either side so that each of his shoulders is supporting the buttock of those first-row players. The friction that is exerted on the ears of the lock during the scrum often causes a deformity known as 'cauliflower ears'. To avoid this deformation, some locks have started to use headgear.

In the story, the father's reaction exhibits that he considers his son's change in player position a relegation, a movement down and not up in the player hierarchy.

'So how do you feel about being a lock?'

'It's okay, I s'pose.'

'A lot of locks are wearing headgear these days, even at your level. Stops them getting cauliflower ears.'

'Yeah.'

'I'd still like to see you play at flanker, though. Perhaps next year when you move to the club.'

'Okay. Maybe.'

But the son doubted that next year he would be playing for his father's old club. There had been talk of going to Europe. There was also a woman his father did not know about. She did not like him playing in the forwards – playing rugby, full stop. (NIXON 2006: 73)

The father makes clear that the lock position in rugby football is not a very desirable position in the light of cauliflower ears and headgear to avoid getting them. He would like to see his son continue playing the dynamic, powerful flanker. The father has future plans for his son concerning his career at rugby. The son's answer is evasive. He has his own plans for the future and they do not include rugby football. He plans to take his big OE (overseas experience) and a girl he likes does not want him to play rugby. He is willing to stop playing all together, not necessarily because his girlfriend wants him to, but because it is not important to him. Rugby is not something that conveys identitarian essentials for him. The time of the rugby player as most desired job and the identity that dogs it (as agent for the nation) is

coming to its end. In the story we witness the moment of initiation, or rather, *termination* or abdication of a certain identitarian space by the son.

The father slid onto the bench and grasped the bar. [...] He still felt cold, though he has stretched, even after the first set. His muscles felt short and tight. The hundred and thirty pounds rose and fell but there was a twinge in his shoulder. [...] There was sweat beneath his hair but he still did not feel warm.

His son slipped off his sweatshirt and hung it on a nail on the wall. He was wearing an old T-shirt, almost too small for him now, and his father saw how the light cast shadows under the curve of his chest and along the ridges at the back of his arms. In a few years he had gone from being tall and skinny to simply big. Solid and still growing. (NIXON 2006: 73-4)

His father feels the age in his bones, whereas the son is seemingly on the apogee of his physical virility. He has outgrown his T-shirt and his body reflects his training. The light casts muscular shadows on the son's body. The son cheekily asks for more weight.

Slowly the weight was pushed up. The boy's father curled his fingers around the bar, ready to lift it when his son couldn't. But he was not needed. The son's chest was taut and straining, the muscles contracting and bunched. [...] His expression was triumphant.

'Well, done. That's a lot of weight.' The father stood a little apart and looked at his son.

The boy had never lifted more than him. It had always been natural that he should be stronger, his son weaker, but in the past few months they had both been struggling beneath the weight. [...] [N]ever before had either of them had all the weight on. And his son had never lifted more than him. (NIXON 2006: 75)

The father is astonished and flabbergasted at his son's strength that has outdone his own. His role as mentor and supporter is seriously challenged and called into question concerning its validity. The son has emancipated physically and subsequently given expression to his independence concerning all other areas of self-realisation. In a last desperate upheaval, the father wants to keep up with his son and prove his masculinity and eligibility. The act of bench-pressing is reinterpreted as struggle for domination and hegemony. It is no longer a simple training session



between father and son but a discourse of failure and success in proving one's masculinity.

The father paused, his hands wrapped around the cold metal as he tried to put his mind into the right place. Any thoughts of weakness or failure or what might happen would mean he would not be able to do it. Thoughts like that would trap him under the bar. The weight would come crushing down on his chest and he would be humiliated, pinned until his son was able to come around and flick the whole thing sideways off him on to the concrete. (NIXON 2006: 76)

To fail in pushing the same weight as his son would be humiliating for the father, so he ponders. He would be helpless under the weight and dependent on his son's assistance to lift the weight off him. Even though he rejoices his own role of teacher and assistant, he cannot bear the thought of his son suddenly taking over this position. The natural power hierarchy would be subverted. But not to try to push the same weight as his son would mean giving up the dominant position without a fight, and hegemony is not easily given up. The fight does not last long, though:

It was too heavy. He got it so far, a hand's width, and then it stopped. He trembled and strained, his faced red. His teeth ground together and his lips pulled back. [...]

Push.

Push.

Push.

Away.

Back up to where his son was waiting.

He felt something deep inside himself rip and tear. He was not precisely sure where it was, just somewhere deep in him, in his gut. A stabbing that twisted inside him. He heard himself cry out, all the trapped air flying out of him up into the shadows above. The weight fell back.

And then his son was helping him. Pulling the weight up and away from him. And then it was gone.

'You okay, Dad? Dad?' (NIXON 2006: 76-7)

The father's strength falters and his son has to help him out. His son standing above the father has lifted the weight off that would have crushed the father. His son puts away the weights and pulls down the garage door and goes back into the

house. The father steps out into the wintry night, stands next to the old pear tree: "It was old and gave no more pears that were worth eating. The night was bitter and in the morning he knew there would be frost on the grass" (NIXON 2006: 78). Like an old tree, the father ponders he cannot offer his son any more 'crop'. His time of physical virility and hegemony is officially over. From now on he will be watching his son from the sidelines. In this respect, the son's transition mirrors a similar event on part of the father: He transitions into 'old man', the 'old protocol' and as the tree, no longer able to fructify.

"Weight" is a story about the emancipation of the son against the father and the ideals and concepts the father represents. The act of *doing weights* is an act of negotiating masculinity and hegemony. It is the act with which the son is able to challenge the father's domination and recuperate his emancipation and own eligibility. The father's wish for the son to distinguish himself as rugby player and agent of the nation does no longer have validity. The father wants his son to perform the most attractive position wherever possible, even within an already attractive arena such as rugby football.

The son though has different plans for his future. He wishes to emancipate himself from iconic monoliths such as rugby football and subsequently all other hegemonic masculine manifestations of national value. In order to achieve his emancipation and establish his own eligibility and credibility he has to undergo a certain initiation (or as stated above *abdication*) ordinance. Bench-pressing as a repetitive muscle memory exercise consolidated his father's position as mentor and authority. It was the father who was the epitome of 'manliness' and the son who was supposed to follow suit and try his best to approximate the ideal. The father's physical superiority authenticated his authority over his son through the act of bench-pressing. But the son has grown, physically. His constant growing has caused a break in the repetition of the act. Their roles are reversed causing the established hierarchy to collapse. The son now physically *outdoes* his father and in his stead plays the role

of the supporter and supervisor. The instability caused to the naturalised hierarchy triggers astonishment on the part of the father and an opportunity of emancipation for the son. The emancipation of the son is akin to an initiation. The initiation here is in the first place a demission from the current space of identity, where the father's authority has kept his son. Being stronger than his father, the son can now take steps into unknown possible spaces (of identity). Whereas traditionally, "social puberty" as by Arnold van Gennep comprises specific rites of in-corporation into a specific group or a new world, we might observe ex-corporation in "Weight". The son's *overpowering* (measureable by metrology) of his father through the deviance in the repeated act of bench-pressing initiates his entry into the fraternity of 'valid' and 'eligible' New Zealand masculinity, thus subsequently facilitating his wishes for demission of the same space of 'eligible' New Zealand masculinity. He is now a 'man' and may choose to be a different 'man'. It is the simple act of deployment of the male body, the playful strengthening of the body, bench-pressing in order to negotiate masculinity between father and son that sets the ball in motion.

The vulnerability of New Zealand masculinity lies in its very own nature: it puts so much emphasis on physical virility that a simple act of overpowering by means of numbers ('objective' weight measurements) may cause the hierarchy to crumble. It is easily subverted. The only factor, it seems, that gave the father authority is that he was physically stronger than his son. If this is the only diaphragm between the position of power and the position of subordinate it is indeed only a question of time until this diaphragm is ripped to pieces and the hierarchy overthrown. The son's emancipation is triggered by his trespassing of the dividing line between superiority and subordination.

The namelessness of the two characters underlines their allegorical power to express the two entities of traditional manifestation of masculinity and cultural identity versus non-traditional, more heterogeneous possibilities. I say non-traditional because the son does not know yet where he will find his space (his style). The pri-

ority lies in breaking away from a restrictive identitarian fraternity that his father is representative of and wants him to be in.

## 2.5 *MOCK HEROIC: "RAT" (1999)*

Some of the younger writers, like Brandt, they are very aware of the changes and are sometimes getting a bit of a pathetic humour out of it. (JONES: Interview March 2009)

After Carl Nixon, the second exponent of the younger generation of writers I would like to draw attention to in my chapter on the 'breaking' of traditions is William Brandt born in 1961. He has found his way quickly into the canon of New Zealand literature, has received several prestigious awards and a couple of his stories have been included in renowned short story collections. He published *Alpha Male*, his first collection of short stories, in 1999 and was reviewed benevolently by Jane Westaway: "[Y]ou soon discover the title is ironic, the contents guaranteed testosterone-reduced. [...] Without exception [Brandt's alpha males] are all on the back foot, at the top of no pecking order, and at the mercy of events beyond their control" (WESTAWAY 1999: 5). A young, loud voice amongst dearly loved older voices, Brandt engages in delineating global problems of modern Western society, demolishing the pillars on which New Zealand society and national identity has been erected and deconstructing the anachronistic manifestations of New Zealand discourses on masculinity, tongue-in-cheek.

So for example, in his first novel *The Book of the Film of the Story of My Life* (2002) he makes fun of the New Zealand nation's obsession with the All Blacks, the national rugby union team: "This whole black clothing thing is a plague sweeping the New Zealand nation. [...] Everywhere, New Zealanders are in black. Black ties, black suits, black shirts. They must be in mourning for their standard of living" (BRANDT 2002: 77). He deprives the colour black of its iconic 'national' implications and reduces it to a discourse on the colour black as expression of grief. The age of

the homogenous national 'titans' and all-embracing, monolithic events has come to an end and given way to the age of deconstruction and individuality.

"Rat", a mock heroic short story of a man's battle with, well, a rat, was first published in 1999 in Brandt's collection *Alpha Male* and was reprinted in the 2000 collection *Boys' Own Stories*. A mock heroic is a work that parodies or satirises ('mocks') 'classical' stereotypes of heroic figures and events (or their literary treatment). The most well-known mock heroic poem is perhaps Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* from 1712. Pope strictly follows the traditional, classical structure of the epic and tells of mundane events using the lyrical language of epic poem.

The classical heroic figure that "Rat" mocks is a New Zealand masculinity trying to establish a heroic identity by reenacting identities of colonial warrior or soldier ancestry. In layman's terms, the short story mocks the reenactment of imagined heroic ancestors; it mocks the very performance that should constitute the agent's identity. The nature of satire is also caustic, so provocation and political incorrectness are inherent to the genre. The story mocks the very act of identity formation along the lines of 'past glories' because, as it reveals, the past is always a construction and imaginary. The victories that once were cannot be used to give meaning to the present because nostalgia is a deceiving yearning for an idealised past (literally, a yearning for home) that never was.

The story begins with the introduction of Perry and James, the latter of which plays only a minor character. They are soldiers of a great cause that comprises the merciless hunting and killing of – flam! – mice: Perry and James two (young?) men of unknown age and relation to each other share a flat and preen themselves on the number of mice each of them can chop, trample, crush or bludgeon. So akin to the

last chapter, masculinity here becomes measurable in the number of dead mice. The two competitive hunters pursue two different styles of hunting:

Perry was the specialist – all three of his kills had been with the knife. He would squat for hours by the oven, the blade poised in his hand, waiting for a mouse to poke its nose out. That was all it took. One peek and he'd have their heads off. James' style was more eclectic, working off instinct and the inspiration of the moment. He'd be reading the paper in the lounge, or practising yoga in the hall. Suddenly, without warning, he'd bound across the room in a blur of movement, snatching up an empty bottle, or a fly swat, or a discarded shoe as he ran. A mouse would die. (BRANDT 2000: 31)

Perry is prone to the technique of stalking; whereas James is more of an Asiatic-reminiscent martial arts warrior who engages in serious Zen meditation and soul-searching before abruptly bludgeoning a surprised mouse. Being true and honest soldiers, they agree on a code of honour according to which all the killings have to be carried out:

Under the rules of play, a kill could only be claimed if the body was presented for inspection by the other party. Road-kill, cat-kill or death by natural cause were not eligible, nor was poisoning or trapping. The only legitimate kill was one resulting directly from an act of violence carried out by one of the two participants, acting alone. (BRANDT 2000: 31)

A 'killing' is defined by the active exertion of physical violence on the mouse and only eligible if the body could be presented. Other causes of death are not counted as victories. Perry and James' perception of warriorhood also makes them celebrate their victories with specific customs that are vitriolically recalling Western narrations of customs and warrior protocol of indigenous cultures during the age of colonisation: They bury the dead mice in a mass grave in the garden. Perry plans to dig them up at some later point, make earrings out of their skulls and sell them at the market. James collects the mice's tails to manufacture a belt. They also tried to skin a mouse "but it was too fiddly" (BRANDT 2000: 31). Even though the boys' re-enactment of imaginary ancient warriorhood and codes of honour (that are obvi-

ously a mélange of several well known Western depictions of indigenous protocols) might receive a raised eyebrow or an angry frown by purists of political correctness, one must always bear in mind that the story is a mock heroic and realise what the mock is aimed at. As readers we are aware that the boys are randomly assembling rituals of scalping, one's embellishment with (body) parts of the victim for swaggering purposes or the ritual of head-taking as souvenir of kill. Naturally, their reenactment is carried out through the 'omnipotent' perspective of the colonisers, adding to the mock effect a problematic instance perhaps that should not be overstressed. The 'mocked' performances speak for their agents.

Then Perry gets a phone call from his ex-girlfriend:

'Hi.'  
'Uh...?'  
'It's me.'  
'Uh...'  
'Jasmine.'  
'Oh. Hi.'  
'Hi.'  
'Long time no see.'  
'Well, yeah.'  
'Listen, can you do me a favour?'  
'Uh...'  
'I need a man.'  
'Um...Jasmine, I thought...'  
'There is a mouse. It's in the kitchen. We've shut the door and we think it's trapped. We can hear it moving around in there. We need a man to kill it for us. (BRANDT 2000: 32)

Perry's ex-girlfriend cunningly uses expressions that adulate Perry's masculinity. "I need a man" triggers Perry's imagination into certain sexual direction, as there is only one situation he can think of where a woman might be in need of a man. His assumption is disappointed though since the 'true' reason why they need a man is a mouse in their kitchen that needs to be killed. The allusions to Perry's masculinity flatter him of course and precipitate in him the wish to perform his masculinity

accordingly and subsequently reaffirm it. His ex-girlfriend, so to speak, has Perry by his masculine balls. Also, since Perry and James have established such a heroic narrative around their mouse-killing, Perry's warrior instinct is activated.

What follows is structurally parallel to classical epics: Perry prepares for the battle and accessorises with suitable weapons:

He ran to his room, reached under the bed and brought out a three-foot sword. It was an old World War One bayonet his grandfather had brought back from the occupation of Samoa. Perry had restored it himself, and it had taken him hours and hours of diligent work. Grinding and polishing, polishing and grinding, honing and oiling. It was shiny and sharp as a razor. (BRANDT 2000: 33)

To fight with a weapon that has been in his family for generations aligns Perry with his bellicose ancestors. The bayonet represents the victories of the past; it incorporates in itself a narration of the glorious past. As so often, the past is invoked to give meaning and identity to the present. Armed with the glories of the past attached to his grandfather's sword, Perry arrives at his ex-girlfriend's:

'My, that's a long sharp sword you have there,' she said.  
'Tools of the trade,' he explained casually. 'He'll probably be under the stove, and the knife mightn't reach.' He held up the carving knife to illustrate his point.  
'Whatever you say,' said Jasmine. 'Looks like I called the right man, anyhow.' (BRANDT 2000: 33)

Jasmine's adoration for Perry's "long sharp sword" as hackneyed phallic metaphor prides Perry on his masculinity and even envisions his sexual prowess which he, of course, dispatches as 'self-evident'. His sword is but a necessary tool of his "trade" to make women happy. His ex-girlfriend flatters his masculinity, upon her observation of the size of his "tool" and his naturalisation of the said necessary size to render the "job" successful. Jasmine hides in the bedroom while the "killing" is going on.



What follows then is a detailed description of the heroic battle between beast and man, deploying diverse linguistic metaphors, similes and allusions to fit the tone of the mock heroic. Perry sneaks about in the kitchen to locate the mouse:

But when Perry saw it he didn't pounce. Instead he jumped backwards and clutched at a chair, suppressing a scream. It wasn't a mouse, it was a rat. It was in a corner, watching him. An enormous furry rat with a long naked tail trailing behind it across the floor. Vermin. [...] This was no mouse. A mouse was a streak across the floor, a flurry movement. But this, this was an animal, crouching in the corner, watching him, planning its moves, ready to fight for its life. This was *personal*. He was going to need the sword. (BRANDT 2000: 34)

That the alleged mouse turns out to be a rat is sheer treachery and brings about a change in the battle. No longer is it a fair battle between two equal parties; it is a battle between two arch-enemies. The rat that pretended to be a mouse poses a personal insult to Perry. Such an enemy calls for the big weapon. His training in killing mice seems to have been but preparation for this one moment, the climax, his proof of manliness. After regaining his composure, Perry reasons vengefully: "He held the shining steel up in front of him. He was going to kill this rat. He was going to kill it dead. He was going to smash the fucker to smithereens and then by God he was going to fuck Jasmine. He was going to do it" (BRANDT 2000: 34). The "shining steel" applies on Perry the attributes of nobility and heroism. And a 'true' male hero has to do 'what a hero's gotta do': Kill the beast and mate with the lady. The concept of 'To the Victor the Spoils' is enacted. Killing the rat will be the reaffirmation of his masculinity and will subsequently guarantee Jasmine's appreciation and *acts of gratitude*. Perry's motivation reaches its pinnacle. The war cry that his bellicose ancestors have ejaculated before him squeezes out "from somewhere deep inside him" (BRANDT 2000: 34) and signals the beginning of the battle. The rat responds to his war cry with "a piercing squeak of its own" (BRANDT 2000: 35) and engages. The battle is a chaotic mess of the rat jumping to and fro and Perry hacking at it with his sword. The notions of "blitzkrieg", "berserker rage" and "pandemonium" (perhaps alluding to a visit to the underworld?) add the necessary epic

and exaggerated dimension to the narration. The rat exhibits agility and tactics Perry marvels at while he completely demolishes the kitchen with the momentum of his sword. After three pages of serious battling the rat makes “a grave tactical error” (BRANDT 2000: 36) and is moribund:

Now that it was in there, there was no way it could get out again, without turning its back. For a vital half second it would be vulnerable and defenceless. The rat was trapped in the cupboard like a – well, like a rat. His arm aching, his body pouring with sweat, Perry thrust again and again. It was a nightmare. Would nothing kill the beast? [...] his luck came in as the rat’s ran out. He impaled it, right through the middle of the belly. The rat screamed. He shouted, dropped the sword and jumped back across the room. He crouched behind the overturned table, sickened, fascinated, horrified. The rat kicked and scrabbled, scrabbled and kicked, they lay squeaking faintly, stuck on the end of the sword like a four-legged shish kebab, gouts of rat’s blood leaking darkly across the tomato soup tins. Please, please God let it die, prayed Perry. A hind leg trembled a couple more times, then it was still. (BRANDT 2000: 36)

To impale a rat with a sword from World War I beggars all imagination. Seemingly though, Perry strides off the battlefield as victorious. The kitchen is a “bomb-site” and Jasmine comments worriedly: “Sounded like Word War Three in there” (BRANDT 2000: 37). She thanks him by reaffirming his masculinity: “Some things you just need a guy for” (BRANDT 2000: 37). Perry’s satisfaction seems legitimate, having killed the rat he is now about the take care of ‘the spoils’ of the battle. Perry engages in the necessary act of cleaning up the mess he has caused. He is still jazzed and adrenalised after the fight: “Perry [...] tried to pull himself together. His hands were shaking like leaves. Come on, he told himself, snap out of it. You got it. You nailed the fucker. Right through the middle. Pat on the back for Perry” (BRANDT 2000: 38). His killing was not only a mere act of life extinguishing, no, it was performed beautifully: He thrust his sword right through the middle of the beast. He has exerted masculine virility upon the rat; he has “nailed the fucker”. Upon entering the kitchen “armed with bucket, mop, gloves, towels, etcetera” (BRANDT 2000:

38) he has to realise that the rat is still alive and breathing. He laments his obligation as noble warrior to provide the rat with a mercy killing:

Perry wailed. He felt a wave of pity and sorrow. He knew what he had to do. It was going to be one of the hardest things he had ever done. [...] It had to be a swift, clean chop. He judged the angle, practiced the swing. [...] It had to be instantaneous, the rat must suffer as little as possible. Goodbye, little brother.

The rat gave a sudden, convulsive heave. It flipped itself right off the end of the sword. Perry screamed as droplets of rat blood splattered his face. The rat dived across the room and out the kitchen door. (BRANDT 2000: 39-40)

Perry shows empathy for the honourable opponent he has to mercy-kill: it has proven an inveterate foe and the duel was fair and respectable. The rat tricks Perry though and escapes for good.

Although Perry has not fulfilled part one of the heroic quests, Jasmine is still willing to accord Perry his prize. A completely exhausted warrior ends up in bed with a forceful Jasmine. After his failure though to consolidate his masculinity he also proves impotent in bed with his Ex. “‘I’m sorry,’ said Perry. He said it over and over again” (BRANDT 2000: 41). His warrior masculinity is so shattered by his failure to perform accordingly and kill the rat that his sexual virility almost inevitably shatters as well.

Now, I would like to say a few words to Perry and James’ performances of nostalgic warriorhood and the similarity of their victory rites with ceremonial customs of indigenous peoples. Michaela Moura-Koçoglu conducted intensive research on modern interpretations of Māori warriorhood and their representations in New Zealand Māori fiction. The parallels and relevance to the short story “Rat” of Moura-Koçoglu’s observations are stunning: The boys are, akin to the protagonists in Māori fiction, “translating the indigenous cultural concept into a modern ‘war-

rior tradition' [...] [T]he māna [sic] (prestige; honor) that indigenous warriors gained in combat in the pre-colonial era is projected onto contemporary life." (MOURA-KOÇOĞLU 2006: n.p.) Moura-Koçoğlu traces in Māori fiction what Brandt's protagonists do in his short story. For the lack of mysticism and spirituality in their modern Western society, the two boys reenact a nostalgically romantic past. For the lack of a better and more satisfying identification that modernity can offer them they look into an imagined past (nostalgic past) to create their place in the present. They follow the rules of national identity formation. The boys deliberately choose a past that they create according to their needs and then reenact it, with humorous effect.

The killing of mice is the mock heroic reenactment of imagined past glories and victories and serves as equally heroic means to reaffirm and consolidate their masculinities. The boys want their performance of hunting and killing to be an alignment with the actions of warrior masculinities from allegedly ancient, constructed times. Indeed, they reenact an identity through imitating their deeds. Reenactment, essentially, is an attempt to create certain aspects of a historical period or event. It may be a battle or involve a whole period. Perry and James may be described as hard-core reenactors. They seek to immerse in their reenactment and live as closely as possible to the chosen identity. The chosen identity is their own creation, somewhere situated in a general understanding of past as the summation of time and events that happened between then and now. We do not get enough information as to whether there is in fact a specific cultural identity they wish to reenact. Perry and James simulate events that they consider fit and recognisable of the chosen warrior identity. Hard-core reenactors like them stay in character for entire periods of time. They immerse in a simulation of invented characters stemming from a pseudo-narration of their past. They randomly gather various aspects, concepts and protocols of cultural settings and appropriate them to provide for them a new sense of identity, mysticism and spirituality.

Also, their creation of warrior masculinity gives them a sense of gender distribution and separation that is no longer valid but is still met with nostalgia of the good old days: There are jobs that only men can do. Killing a rat is indeed nothing one “needs a man for” but then it is the flattery that Perry savours when his ex-girlfriend calls out for help. The situation is an opportunity to validate his self-perception in so that his understanding of what is really going on around him is completely obscured; Jasmine is cunningly misusing his self-absorbedness by pretending her subordinate position within gender hierarchies. Her adulations and her assertion that catching a rat in her kitchen is a man’s job flatters Perry’s invented warrior identity and he is unable to refuse to help the lady in need. Perry’s craving for masculinity and heroic identity becomes his weakness and is easily exploitable.

Of course, the boys’ manifestation of warriorhood has a comic effect, as the mundaneness of killing mice can hardly be perceived a heroic act in Western cultural understanding. Mice and rats are ‘minor’ rodents associated with dirt and vermin. In the tradition of the mock heroic genre, Brandt uses language, invocations, lamentations, exclamations and similes worthy of a heroic battle depiction. So, even though the protagonists engage in an imitation of a pseudo-historical identity through repeating their acts and their performances are successful in terms of their personal ambitions, *because* they are subject to mockery their identities cannot be verified and validated. It is the nature of the genre that makes this story break with the ‘traditional’. Brandt’s story can be read as a critique of the concept of nostalgia as he lays open the nostalgic processes that are used to proclaim and perpetuate the monolithic national narration of New Zealand, especially in the manifestation of masculine events and identities that are authenticated as ‘national’ and collective memory. Through vilifying the concept of nostalgic reenactment in a mock heroic short story he stresses the obsolescence of the maintenance of ‘national’ identity formation on the basis of (anyway created and stylised and thus ‘untrue’) past glories.

### 3 CREATING NEW TRADITIONS

The third and last section of the thesis is an attempt to analyse performances of masculinity in short stories that explicitly create *new* New Zealand identities through the reinvention of traditions. Since identities strive to be justified and verified through their past realisations and their continuity, reinvented identities are highlighted similarly in their tradition. To negotiate identities means to put emphasis on their continuous existence in time and place and their justification for the current manifestation of their selves. The first chapter of this section will examine Peter Wells' historical short story "Little Joker Sings", in which the author establishes a queer rendering of the New Zealand national experience of World War II. Although the short story was published only in 2006, I set the beginnings of the 'Wellian' influence on the understanding of New Zealand identities to 1990, the year his short film *A Taste of Kiwi* was produced. The second chapter takes a closer look at the rediscovered notion of *takatāpui* as Māori queer identity and how it finds reference in literature. The third and last chapter deals with the absence or lack of belonging as a manifestation of a modern crisis in New Zealand masculinity as gender identity and how the troubled males seek a way out of this calamity in recent short fiction.

It does not come as a surprise that the new creations of New Zealand identities stem from the turn of the millennium and the years thereafter – a time when New Zealanders started to occupy themselves with the question of their own identities and national features. Dissatisfied with hackneyed hegemonic imaginations New Zealanders have started to unsettle well-established protocols and look elsewhere to locate what gives them meaning – a process that disembogued into the establishment of the Centre for Research on National Identity at Otago University in 2007, and a process that remains ongoing to this day. Growing interest on the for-

mation of gender and national identity in academic circles as well as in popular culture, and the nagging question of ‘Who are we and where are we going?’ have also been a subject in short fiction, which I will analyse in the following three chapters.

### **3.1 QUEERING THE NATION: PETER WELLS**

#### **3.1.1 A (DIFFERENT) TASTE OF KIWI – TRENDSETTING 1990**

Thank God for gay writers. They are really pulling the fabric apart.  
(Bilbrough: Interview February 2009)

Peter Wells, New Zealand filmmaker, writer, libertine and iconoclast of what theatre scholar Baz Kershaw calls national “spectacles of domination” (2003: 595), left the nation with jaws wide open in 1990 when he made the short film *A Taste of Kiwi*. He dared to queer and homoeroticise a realm of national identification and iconography full of (hyper)masculinity and heterosexuality in so that the short film is still at odds with New Zealand censorship in the twenty-first century. Because of its explicit content, only proof of age and identification facilitates a glimpse of the movie at the National Film Archives in Wellington. Once obtained, the film is of brief satisfaction: it only lasts 60 seconds. The starting point for the film is a Steinlager advertisement<sup>5</sup> featuring New Zealand’s national rugby football team, the All Blacks. The advertisement montages aesthetised slow-motion shots of the rugby players’ naked torsos in rugby action tackling each other. Close-ups of the players’ thighs, buttocks and sweating faces complete the eroticised depiction of rugby football players as perfect examples of masculinity. Wells cleverly and scandalously juxtaposes the sporting All Blacks with scenes of gay pornography by inserting a couple of quick frames of very detailed and explicit close-up material of men engaging in oral and anal sexual intercourse. A rugby player shaking off his

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<sup>5</sup> A beer advertisement entitled *Stand by Me* by Mackay King from 1987.

sweat in slow-motion at the end of the advertisement is brilliantly mirrored with an image of a male pornography performer receiving male ejaculate in his face. By choreographing the erect and thrusting unveiled penis, Wells not only objectifies the male body in a time where popular culture was still more occupied with the female body, but he also visualises and queers the subtext of representations of New Zealand rugby football players. The nexus between the institution of national sport and sexuality is openly acknowledged in New Zealand. The sexual subtext of the dominating sporting male which in national endeavours would rather be a heteronormative one breaks with assumptions based on traditions and is queered. The sporting male body is culturally expected to dominate over the male body on the rugby field and over the female body in the bedroom. In *A Taste of Kiwi*, however, the male body exerts power over male bodies both on the rugby field and in the bedroom. The easiness and smoothness with which the junction of male homoerotica and New Zealand rugby football hetero-aesthetics is created leads David Gerstner to observe that

[t]he defensive and strong-willed performative dimension to the New Zealand male pose (especially by those who play sports) is not simply critiqued and dismissed in the film. What makes *A Taste of Kiwi* so egregiously erotic is that it is precisely these representations of masculinity that are (homo)sexualized and displayed as sexually pleasurable for gay men. The All Blacks are easily made into and exchanged with gay porn stars for the purpose of eliciting homosexual desire and excitement. (GERSTNER 2007: 124)

Gerstner pins down that it is the parodist deconstruction of the dominant image of New Zealand masculinity through homosexual gestures that is easily reread as and “made into” homoerotica. *A Taste of Kiwi* shows the tightrope walk of hypermasculinity in sportsmen’s performances of their bodies as signs of heterosexuality and its attraction for and of the homoerotic gaze. Filmmakers like Wells “often resort to subtexts, or themes and meanings just below the hegemonic surface [...] that may be read ‘against the grain’” (STAR 2004: 191). He utilises New Zealand (hyper)heterosexual performance to convey its homosexual appeal. He shows quite



plainly that the heterosexual sporting male may be and is a source of homoerotic satisfaction and an object of homosexual consumption. Thus, he succeeds in queering a highly (hetero)sexualised and gendered bastion of New Zealand national narration. In a way akin to Patrick Johnson's observations on queer studies and images of rugby players, Wells' narration of the New Zealand rugby player "transgresses the image of the 'rugby player' in the social imaginary and potentially deconstructs power relations within the context of rugby as a sport" (JOHNSON 2008: 166).

*A Taste of Kiwi* is but one example of Peter Wells' attempts to queer, rewrite, de- and reconstruct New Zealand history and memory. During his university studies, Wells preferred history to literature, because history studies enabled him to "locate the actual history which fitted my fantasies" (as quoted in Debra DALEY 1992: 53). Wells endeavours a balancing act between history and story. "Actual history" is what he narrates in his stories. Wells writes his own narration into historical actuality providing an alternative national narration. It is interesting that he uses the verb "locate" to circumscribe the act of writing. He gives room to a history that fits his needs and desires; he finds and provides a specific location for his histories to take place. Wells successfully creates place and time – histories – according to his imagination.

Anne Maxwell, who investigated how history was reproduced in New Zealand cultural productions of the mid-nineties, films and novels to be specific, detects a certain appetite among the New Zealand audience:

In the last decade New Zealanders have been more than usually preoccupied with producing and consuming narratives that revise the nation's history. The large number of books dealing with New Zealand's colonial past that have appeared in this period suggests that history is being seen as one way to enter the post-colonial condition. [...] [N]ovelists and film-makers have carefully avoided producing histories

based on Enlightenment notions of truth. This refusal [...] places them in league with the unofficial histories of the nation that have been marginalised in the interests of 'progress' [...] such as the oral histories belonging to Maori [...]. But it has also placed them in league with theories of history writing that aim radically to transform the power relations within modern societies. (MAXWELL 1995: 232)

Maxwell scents the tergiversation of both producer and consumer of cultural productions from the absolute notion of "truth" towards a discourse of constructiveness of history. Producer and consumer sense the arbitrariness of history as a concept determined by hegemonic colonial forces – and the 'national interest'. Rewriting and re-consuming the Other national narration expresses postcolonial interest in shaking off the fetters of colonial hackneyed power relations. Maxwell calls subaltern, "marginalised" imaginations of events "unofficial histories of the nation" – not approved by hegemonic discourse or the "interest of 'progress'" (MAXWELL 1995: 232); they *are* nonetheless histories of the nation.

Although Peter Wells does not want to be limited to being a gay writer and filmmaker, some of his best work deals with recreating and acknowledging gay memories and histories of New Zealand. He is the co-editor of the anthology *Best Mates: Gay Writing in Aotearoa New Zealand* and thus furthered the overcome of the exclusion and invisibility of homosexuality in New Zealand (literary) history and highlights the continuity of the latter: "[W]e exist and always have although we've never been acknowledged. [...] Because we've always been excluded you have to make a definite statement saying we are here before we will get included" (as quoted in BROWN 1997: n.p.). In the introduction to *Best Mates*, Wells attempts a definition of gay literature, which is more useful in light of his writing than of any other gay author:

Gay fiction could almost be defined by the *veritas* of its description of the sexuality. In short, one has to be able to describe not only the physical actions of sexuality (which any writer could probably do) but also the often surprising emotions which go with these actions (which many

writers find more problematic) – the profound journey which has led to that apparently meaningless moment. [...] The moments [...] of recognition, [...] of rage and joy at finding. (WELLS & PILGRIM 1997: 7)

Wells accentuates the depiction of a sexual journey as a feature of gay fiction, and especially his gay writing. While he states that any writer could convey the physical component of sexuality, Wells insinuates that the emotional journey leading to the moment of sexual recognition, the “surprising emotions”, or what he calls *veritas*, would prove problematic to many writers. Gay fiction conveys the *sense* of truth, of *veritas*, in the depiction of sexuality. Wells’ assertion underlines what is perhaps most prominent in his own writing: the *sensual* memory of New Zealand history. Leaving aside historical factual information, Wells constructs emotional historical truths for New Zealand. As Gerstner formulates so suitably: “[...] Wells, the ‘dancer’ who choreographs history with his ‘foreign (queer) footprints’ through his rewriting of the historical, rehearses national memory through the sensuality of the materialist debris of the past” (2007: 126). Wells “choreographs” subaltern history, using the palpable “debris of the past” to stage sensuality of unofficial myths of the nation. Wells repeatedly indulges in sensual homoerotic pleasures and functionalises them to queer New Zealand national memory and foreshadow an alternative homosexual counter-discourse of national identity into the future – and he is most successful in his endeavour.

### 3.1.2 REWRITING HISTORY: “LITTLE JOKER SINGS” (2006)

I was [...] aware of New Zealand stories about men who met during World War II and formed strong bonds that were both comradely and erotic. I have heard of these men having relationships over a lifetime. Indeed, Frank Sargeson, one of the key figures in New Zealand literature, stands as a testament to the liveliness of these kinds of (often hidden) relationships. ‘Little Joker Sings’ is an attempt to write back into history one such story that otherwise might have been elided. (WELLS in KIDMAN 2006: 235)

Wells explains his motivation for his prosimetric short story "Little Joker Sings" and his endeavour to write "write back into history" a story of male friendship and love during New Zealand's engagement in World War II. He wanted to give voice to an unofficial national narration of World War II, a historical moment deeply anchored in the New Zealand psyche as trigger of self-definition and national identity. "Little Joker Sings" is a very recent retelling, published in 2006 in the third volume of *The Best New Zealand Fiction* edited by Fiona Kidman.

The historical background of the short story is formed by the North African Campaign from 1940 to 1943 up until the Italian campaign and finally the end of World War II. The North African Campaign and the subsequent years of war are a major means of national identity formation in New Zealand. The Anzac experience of World War II prevails as a monolithic, heteronormative, decisive event of nation identity formation and national memory. The military institution Anzacs pooled a variety of masculinities in an all-male environment and rendered yet another all-male experience a national event in New Zealand history. The force of hegemonic heterosexual masculine memory of the event pushes into invisibility Other memories, Other histories of the same event. In accordance with his own aims and the urging of New Zealand audience to produce unofficial histories of the nation, Wells queers a monolithic iconic event or narration in New Zealand's national memory.

The place is foreign ground: During the lengthy North African campaigns from 1941 to 1943, New Zealand troops were in action against German and Italian forces and had to mourn several thousand casualties in the arduous conditions in the desert – the highest casualty rate per capita in the Commonwealth (cf. KING 2003: 406). The Axis forces collapsed in May 1943 and surrendered; the New Zealanders subsequently took part in the Italian campaign alongside Great Britain to push the Germans out of Italy reclaiming Bologna, Padua and Venice. They were on their way to Trieste when in May 1945 Germany surrendered:

Germany surrendered on 8 May 1945, V-E Day, and New Zealanders in towns and cities awoke on the morning of 9 May to the sounds of whistles, hooters and car horns. Scenes that followed in the course of the day were unusual in a country that did not normally favour public display of emotions. (KING 2003: 406)

The arena, the stage, is an all-male military setting: As defenders of the nation and respective national values, New Zealand men in the military – brothers in arms, as it were – serve to symbolise the New Zealand nation. Holly Allen, who investigates gender and sexuality in the U.S. military model, mentions that “the model of national community that the military helps to promote is a model of male-bonding. It reinforces the centrality of hetero-sexual men [...] while denying visibility to other social groups” (2000: 311). Because the military defends the nation, deviance in the form of sexuality and gender mean a threat to the social construction. The homosociality in the military, the loving mateship between soldiers, could potentially develop into homosexuality since “men’s segregation in military units could facilitate close emotional and sexual bonds” (BRICKELL 2005: 41). Chris Brickell also states in his 2008 book *Mates & Lovers* that soldiers “away from home, sometimes for the first time [...] seized the possibilities presented to them” (BRICKELL 2008: 180). It is thus the distance to their home culture and the spatial closeness in military lodgings that render possible and make room for a development of romantic attachment between soldier men and blur the delineation between virile homosociality and homosexuality: the latter could easily be disguised as the former in military barracks. Tight homosociality and absolute camaraderie was the desired quality of relationships between soldiers – “the particularities of combat encouraged tight male bonds” (BRICKELL 2008: 179) – which during lonely nights in barracks and bivvy units would often fade into physical closeness and (homo)erotic intimacies. It was during those times and circumstances that lovers were able to benefit from the presumption that these close male relationships were platonic and desirable. In his historical study of New Zealand sexuality Eldred-Grigg goes far with asserting that “homosexuality no doubt thrived in the military camps of New Zealand” (ELDRED-GRIGG 1984: 49).

When examining relationships between members of the same sex in New Zealand history, Brickell warns about the anachronism of the term “gay” and suggests instead the usage of the circumscription “homoerotically inclined” (BRICKELL 2008: 9). Whereas some men were able to “forge [...] permanent identities around their wartime experiences” (BRICKELL 2008: 181) many of the soldiers who shared erotic closeness with a comrade would return home from the war leaving their homoerotic attachment behind to lead a regulated heteronormative life serving the nation according to the state’s interest: attending to one’s wife, family and the nation’s economy. Thus, it is imperative to regard their homoerotic inclination within its context and circumstance and use the terminology “gay” only with considering its political and discursive position.

Brickell asserts that it is in institutions “sequestered under state control” (BRICKELL 2008: 176), such as the military, that several kinds of parallel universes come into being. The widespread assumptions of heterosexual masculinity in the military brought to life a most diverting stage event: the Kiwi Concert Party, a sort of spin-off of the military entertainment units. Members of the Kiwi Concert Party entertained servicemen during World War II and the aftermath with musical shows, singing, comedy shows and cross-dressing. The performers or “femmes” were celebrated for the realism of their performances. Interestingly, the audience’s perception and interpretation of their drag performances as “just acting” strips them of their queer implication and denies the femmes the performance of their own queer subculture. And since the drag performances served to divert men who were in service for their nation, the performances themselves served a patriotic function. The femmes were publicly deprived of or protected from speculations of homosexuality (cf. BRICKELL 2007: 4). In his case study on the Kiwi concert party, Chris Brickell sums up that discourses of patriotism, professionalism, theatricality and tradition favoured “‘straight’ readings” of the performances thus “preserving the illusion of a heterosexual public space” (BRICKELL 2007: 4-5). The femmes of the

late 1940s passed as heterosexual in the context of the military Kiwi Concert Party where popular gendering was overridden.

Into these times of turmoil, Wells sets his characters in “Little Joker Sings”, Harry and Jim who, amongst the atrocities and ferocities of war, find a common language of love, desire and sensuality within whose limits they can overcome the silence and numbness of a whole generation of emotionally crippled and silenced men.

It is on a night of song and laughter at a New Zealand club in Cairo that Harry and Jim meet – a night of diversion for the weary soldiers. The men share songs and Jim’s solo voice silences all others with the melancholic woefulness of “Lili Marlene”. It is Jim’s voice that bedazzles Harry, a clear voice in those dark hours pervaded by screams and the racket of war. Harry eager to find the source of his bedazzlement deems: “‘Whoever sung that bloody ‘Lili Marlene’ belongs in the fucking Kiwi Concert Party” (WELLS 2006: 184). When Harry realises the little joker next to him is the singer that should be in the Kiwi Concert Party, his bedazzlement transforms into a bodily reaction of sexual nature:

In the strange clarity of desert night Harry had surprised himself by looking all over Jim’s face intensely. Jim was not particularly remarkable-looking. But what he had [...] was an inner liveliness, something silvery, fast. His eyes looked liquid. His body was muscular as an acrobat’s. Harry had been taken aback by a fierce erection springing up inside his shorts. This had taken him so unawares that he grew flustered. (WELLS 2006: 184)

The initial “moment of recognition” is Harry’s first corporal and sensual reaction to another man’s appearance – a moment of Wellian *veritas*, if you will. He is embarrassed – a reaction that David Morgan explains by the alleged ‘revealing’ qualities of the incident:

Erections are a source of embarrassment and humour not simply because they draw attention to the penis, something that is normally kept well out of the public gaze in most Western cultural situations, but because they are seen, rightly or wrongly, as an outer signifier of inner thoughts and desires. While all kinds of stimuli (not all of these sexual by any means) might produce erections, the meanings given to such an event are primarily sexual. (MORGAN 1993: 75)

Harry is embarrassed about his erection because it reveals to himself his (sexual) desire for another man. Harry's erection alludes, even unwillingly performed, to an initiation into his sexual self, as it were. An echo of this initiation is found later during the act of love-making, when Harry realises that it is Jim who is able to provide him with the ultimate sensual experience and moment of self-recognition:

Harry wanted to forget. Harry didn't want to remember. Nothing was said during this encounter. But Harry listened to the moans and cries, at first smothered, then, in time, naked, angry, begging or, most shockingly of all, moans of submission. When he realised they were coming from his own mouth, he gave in to this moment of self-recognition. (WELLS 2006: 187)

Harry's moment of self-recognition is triggered through his vocal reaction during the sexual act with Jim. Recapitulating Wells' definition of gay writing, Wells accentuates the "moments of recognition" and of "rage and joy at finding" these moments to characterise the genre of gay literature. The gay writer has to be able to convey the "*veritas*" of the physical act of sexuality: the journey leading to it, the surprise accompanying the emotional experience as well as the physical components. "Little Joker Sings" is most obviously pervaded by moments of recognition – Wellian "*veritas*" of the sexual act. Recognition dawns upon Harry triggered by the physical action of sex and the emotional steamroll at the sensual sensations developed during the sexual act. The physical act of lovemaking and the sensual experience give way to Harry's self-recognition: he is able to see his true self only through the bodily sensations that Jim – the other body – activates and precipitates in him. It is this importance of corporality, the sensual experience initiating Harry's self-recognition that Wells emphasises in his story. The sensual pleasures Harry



feels when he is with Jim offer a means to Harry's self-recognition: his sexual doing, the act, provides the space for his identity. Harry recognises himself in the active moment of sexual doing.

At first, Harry convinces himself that it is the promise of easy physical relief and the logical extrapolation of solo masturbation to mutual masturbation that drives him into Jim's arms:

It was not unusual for men to toss off. God knows, they needed some relief. For the first eight months of the sex they had together, Harry had told himself it was just a further progression of tossing off. It was like the sex adolescent boys had together. It was functional, intense because it carried the freight of so much unexplored feeling – but it was meaningless. Once over, it had fulfilled its purpose. (WELLS 2006: 188)

In the beginning, Harry regards his sexuality as “functional”, means to an end – corporality without much sensuality to satisfy bodily needs. But in the course of time he realises and has to admit to himself: “It was all about sex and it wasn't” (WELLS 2006: 187). Harry understands that his longing for Jim is something “deeper and closer to love. He did not approach this word however” (WELLS 2006: 189). Linguistically, Harry's constraints to admit his love for the other man are expressed by inserting the quasi-hesitation “as it were”: “Not that he ever really conceded that he and Jim were, as it were, together” (WELLS 2006: 187). “It was after Cassino, when Harry [...] was laid up in hospital, that he began to feel the shape, as it were, of his love for him” (WELLS 2006: 188). The choice of words reflects Harry's insecurity and perhaps even failure to call by its name what he feels for Jim. One of the reasons for Harry not to admit his feelings for the other man is rooted deeply within the accepted convention of Western heterosexual society. Admitting that his relationship to Jim has developed into love would mean being infidel to his wife back home, whereas joining “the other blokes next time they went to a brothel” (WELLS 2006: 186) would be a more acceptable transgression of marital vows. His wife would rather accept a heterosexual functional foray of unfaithfulness in a

brothel than his attachment to a true companion within same-sex territories, Harry reckons. The story world New Zealand society punishes heterosexual corporeal transgressions of conventions less than sensual homosexual transgressions.

After the first weeks of joy and excitement over finding that one moment of recognition, Harry reflects upon his erotic relationship with Jim:

Harry knew, instantly, from the way he had developed this terrible longing to be with Jim, that something had changed in him. He had never felt like this about a man before. That is, not precisely like this. He had had intense friendships with men, but that was mateship. Mateship was a kind of marriage, but without the marriage bed. His relationship with Jim was fuller this way – it was with the marriage bed. (WELLS 2006: 185-6)

Harry realises that his erotic attraction to Jim transgresses the limits of New Zealand protocol of “mateship”. It is under the circumstance of war in a foreign world, pushed into physical closeness in military lodgings that Harry is given the space to slip into homoerotic intimacies. The context facilitates Harry’s homoerotic inclination and provides him with the rare opportunity of self-recognition.

Wells broaches the understanding of ‘mateship’ within antipodean context in the introduction to his anthology of gay writing, suitably titled *Best Mates*:

Australia and New Zealand are the only parts of the globe where heterosexual men refer to their gender generically, and their best friend in particular, by the strange term whose very familiarity blinds us to its queer pitch: *mate*. For one male to *mate* with another male and yet remain defiantly heterosexual provides for forms of verbal and mental acrobatics which call for a master ironist. (WELLS & PILGRIM 1997: 18)

The denotation “mate” masters the impossible: It designates a culturally heterosexual relation between two men whereas linguistically, it conveys a biological act

with chances for reproduction between members of the opposite sex. Harry as an exponent of New Zealand culture and lingo is well aware of “mateship” being on the more heterosexual end of the relationship continuum; yet, he facilitates the notion with his own connotation and installs or resuscitates its linguistic potential as sexual delineation. Harry reactivates and empowers a New Zealand assumed heterosexual denotation to express homosexual inclination: By repeatedly uttering the word “mate” during his and Jim’s love making, Harry queers the concept of the New Zealand mate:

Harry felt defenceless. He felt broken down by the long moan of need for this strange little coot. He wanted to be taken. He wanted to be reduced. He wanted. He did not speak. He parted his lips and all that came out was a strange, almost bleating moan. The word he said – and it was a word he said over and over again during what followed – was ‘mate’.  
(WELLS 2006: 190)

For the lack in cultural ability to call Jim a lover, Harry appropriates the available linguistic entity “mate” and bestows it with the power to denote a male same-sex lover. It is the context in which the term finds usage – two men engaged in the act of same-sex intercourse – that renders it ‘queer’. The sexual act of the two men guarantees the *mates’* ‘queerability’.

Wells’ story alludes strongly to the discourse of silence on several levels:

For once, the essentialist truism that deprives men of emotional expressiveness brings forth emotional attrition and numbness in the soldiers: David Morgan asserts that there is a “commonplace that men have difficulty in expressing their feelings” (MORGAN 1993: 85): Platitudes doom men to emotional inexpressiveness. The deprivation of the ability to express emotions facilitates a whole generation of war-time traumatised males to which society offers one relief only: to drown their

memories in alcohol and cloak with intoxication the unbearable atrocities and deaths they have seen:

He [Harry] had begun to feel, as the war went on, that he was developing some kind of emotional numbness. [...] He saw the war as a long process of attrition, the point of which had been to separate the old Harry from the current Harry. [...] [H]e was given to being a silent bitter drunk. He felt nothing. He saw only corpses in his dreams. He awoke shouting. He was like many of the other men, so nobody took too much notice. They all spent a lot of energy on being drunk." (WELLS 2006: 186)

The Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy leaves Harry wounded and face to face with the horrors of military hospital:

There was a whole ward of men, Harry knew, asleep day after day after day, men who were given drugs so they might sleep off whatever had happened to them, or not happened to them, or what they had feared. [...] Sometimes he heard a man screaming. There were hurried footsteps, the sounds of a struggle, silence. It was worse that what you heard on a battlefield. There were men without legs, without arms, without eyes. Without faces. (WELLS 2006: 188)

The psychological impossibility of the soldiers to process the things they have seen is caused by society silencing them, offering them the refuge of alcohol and drugs so they might erase the horrors from their memories. World War II, as all wars, leaves behind a generation of traumatised males and a society mercilessly ignorant of their collective detriment rendering a full recovery impossible. The fallen ones are remembered in annual parades and other national commemoratives; the remainders are left to come to terms with the horrors of war alone, silently.

Secondly, Harry and Jim's erotic intimacies remain unuttered to the environment. As has been argued earlier, the military as a gendered institution sequestered by state control does not allow for deviance from heteronormative protocol. Even though the circumstances of war, foreign grounds and physical closeness of the

soldiers facilitates homoerotic experiences, cultural discourse in the military erases homosexual opportunities and renders invisible de facto homoerotic practices. It was these homosexual practices and homosexual identities that were inhibited from finding expression by the said heteronormative forces and national narration that would accentuate the hetero-masculine memory of World War II. Wells as a critic of heteronormative historiography writes back into history a memory of deviant character and in so gives pronouncement to the formerly overlooked. He breaks the silence and locates the memories of the Harrys and Jims in New Zealand's iconic national event of World War II.

Silence is also symptomatic of Harry's and Jim's love betwixt the two soldiers.

They met each night by unspoken appointment. It was like so much about their meeting – words unsaid. It was as if vocabulary were numb between them, or certain words were deleted. [...] Nothing much was said – what was said was whispered. (WELLS 2006: 183)

Although Harry was first attracted to Jim by the singer's remarkable voice the story conveys that between the two men "[t]he rest did not need words" (WELLS 2006: 187). Their language is a purely physical and sensual one. Words cannot express Harry's sensual experiences because cultural literacy has not provided him with linguistic entities to embody the *veritas* of their homoerotic encounter. Thus, the language the two men use operates on a solely physical level. The closing poem of the prosimetric short story states:

Love was for girls  
they were  
blokes  
giddy for each other  
lacking a vocabulary  
except the one they  
shaped by tongue  
hand and cock  
(WELLS 2006: 192-3)

Language is a realm where hegemonic forces work their magic and through which ideologies, such as national narrations, are mediated. Wells as a fierce critic of the hegemonic heteronormative exclusive narrations of New Zealand's history empowers his characters with the ability to appropriate available linguistic entities and bodies that may be used as articulatory organs. "Tongue, hand and cock" are the tools with which Harry and Jim are said to communicate with each other. It is de facto the homosexual active body – the dynamic deployment of "tongue, hand and cock" between two men – that mediates meaning. Their doing expresses what actual language controlled by heteronormative forces in power cannot convey. The act of homosexual intercourse coinciding with the respective usage of "mate" enables said word (and concept) to be bestowed with new, queer meaning. To sum up, the verbal silence between the two men is on the one hand symptomatic of 'official' language as gendered heteronormative institutionalisation of national protocol, and on the other hand is a manifestation of the needlessness of mutual verbal recognition. Their bodies recognising each other through the entanglement of "tongue, hand and cock" render words superfluous.

Towards the end of the war, Harry and Jim meet again in Italy after the liberation of Trieste. The celebrations of V-E Day are out in the crowded streets. Their encounter during the celebration is strangely public, Jim among a group of Kiwi Concert Party members.

In broad daylight Jim grabbed Harry's body and thrust it hard against his own – it was like two shields clashing. Then he took Harry's face and, 'in the continental manner', Harry told himself in a dazed voice, Jim kissed Harry on the side of one cheek – a loud, warm, popping kiss – then the other cheek. It got worse – or better. Quite casually, as if he were to the European manner born, Jim laced his arm through Harry's and began to walk along. Harry felt the most abject terror he had felt since he left home. (WELLS 2006: 190)

Jim's public display of affection (PDA) is considered to be an objectionable form of stylised behaviour within New Zealand cultural protocol by Harry. Harry suffers

from a fit of what could be called 'stage-fright' (cf. BELL 2008: 43-5). Kissing of both cheeks and sauntering with arms linked, unacceptable within the New Zealand understanding of male friendship or mateship, is a culturally accepted performance with ritualised character among the continentals, the Europeans. Jim, in contrast to Harry, is well aware of the cultural frame and thus performance conscious: He knows he is performing for an audience. He is aware his action is a performance and he knows how far he can push it and where the cultural borderline is. By deliberately mimicking culturally unobjectionable acting – the European 'version' of acceptable PDA between men – Harry and Jim are recognised by the other revelers as 'one of them', they repeat stylised behavioural patterns:

And gradually he realised nothing was happening or going wrong. Other men – Europeans, it was true – were walking along arm in arm. There were even youths, quite manly youths, he saw, walking along with one small finger laced around each other's. Nobody gave a tinkers. (WELLS 2006: 190)

Harry and Jim's bodily conduct owns a European licence, so to speak. Such conduct may lead to negative sanctions in other cultural contexts, but here, in this specific place and time and circumstance, their act of PDA is acceptable and even appropriate since popular rules of gendering are annulled. The cultural stage and frame allow for retention of the illusion of heterosexuality and a 'straight' reading of their physical conduct. Harry and Jim engage in what I would like to imagine as 'mimicry and camouflage of a cultural snapshot': they willingly appropriate a certain behaviour, an apprehended or perceived characteristic of a certain group representing the models in a specific place at a specific time. By snapshot or *Momentaufnahme* I understand a manifestation and an adherence of a specific moment in time and space within a specific context. In contrast to Homi Bhabha's conceptualisation that mimicry "poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers" (BHABHA 2007: 338), Wells' concept serves protective rather than challenging purposes: Harry and Jim safely 'pass' as heterosexual by mimicking the culturally accepted style of the moment. At the same time, Harry and Jim

render themselves natural, visually inconspicuous, by the act of camouflage. They merge with their surroundings so well that nobody even notices them. Their performance is fully recognised as part of the cultural snapshot. Their acting is not perceived as acting by the audience but as an action by virtue of which they become recognisable as celebratory heterosexual war veterans. Brian Pronger writes about the ability of 'passing' being a distinctive feature of gay minorities in hegemonic heterosexual contexts, such as sport and the military:

Gay men pass in and out of gay contexts [...]. [T]he fluidity of homosexuality is enhanced by the fact that gay men can and often do pass as straight men. If a society then assumes that everyone is heterosexual, it is relatively easy for homosexual men to "pass". (PRONGER 1990b: 147)

It is thus the assumption of heterosexuality as the norm that enables gay men to slip through the radar. In "Little Joker Sings" Harry and Jim avoid detection by mimicry and camouflage. The biggest 'test' of the credibility and success of the two lovers' mimicry and camouflage is the encounter with their *own* kind:

Then they turned a corner and ran into a flock of other Anzacs – they were all drunk, belligerent. Harry felt his body stiffen but Jim, by quickly mimicking a slightly drunken walk, managed to get past. One of the stragglers called out in a sentimental voice, 'And have another one for me, mate.'  
When they got past Jim whispered into Harry's ear, 'Shall we have another one for him, mate?' (WELLS 2006: 190)

Apt in the artistry of mimicry and camouflage and reflexively aware of themselves as acting, Harry and Jim manage to fool even their very own cultural environment. By imitating the postures of drunken Anzac soldiers, by mimicking the cultural snapshot of the hour, they create the illusion of a specific identitarian entity which is acceptable within this arena. Put in layman's terms, they perform the expected identity and are thus recognised as such. After all, what could be more "quintessentially matey" – an expression composed by Chris Brickell (2007: 3) – than a celebration of the military victory over the European axis forces with your mates from the battalion in serious intoxication? The Kiwi straggler calling out to the two lov-



ers to further enjoy another drink in celebratory fashion claims no queer pitch in his utterance of the word 'mate'. Jim immediately jumps on the bandwagon: "Shall we have another one for him, mate?" Afresh, Jim picks up the speech pattern that has been offered by his cultural environment in heterosexual context and applies it to his same-sex lover. After using the term "mate" during love-making sessions and by applying it on his lover now, the two men empower the word to carry queer meaning. Of course, "mate" remains an insider denotation for a male same-sex lover, but nonetheless exhibits how the quality of a powerful heteronormative word can easily be changed. Also, referring to each other as *mates* for the lack of a better word also secures their 'passing' within their own cultural setting. To apply the popularly assumed heterosexual denotation *mate* to refer to their love for one another – to refer to each other as *mates* and not *lovers* – allows for a safe passage and a desired naturalisation within a certain cultural arena. In a way, the designation *mate* is yet again used as a means of camouflaging its queer pitch within the microenvironment of erotic relationship between the two men. The cultural snapshot, the *Momentaufnahme*, becomes Harry and Jim's promised space in which they are able to move and through the act of mimicry and camouflage act out their public display of affection.

The liberation of the city of Trieste and the victory of the allied forces gives way to Jim's exclamation of hope: "It's the end of the war, Harry," Jim kept saying. "The world's going to change. It's all going to be different now!" (WELLS 2006: 190) Jim's hopeful promise of a 'better future' is only true for the specific time, place and circumstance, however. It is the cultural hour that provides the two lovers with the space within which they can formulate their selves, within which they can recognise themselves and one another. Any deviance in time, place and circumstance will lead to the collapse of the stage and annul its availability to the two lovers. Only the fantasy of retention of the *Momentaufnahme*, the utopian freezing of the cultural snapshot allows for the imagination of a 'better future'. Inferring from the inexorable non-linearity of history as a process, there cannot necessarily be a 'bet-

ter future'. The circumstances that brought the two lovers to where they are will prove different from the ones leading them away again. Jim's hopes remain trapped within the cultural snapshot and the stage exit door carries a big padlock. The world is indeed not going to change – not so soon.

With the end of the war come Harry and Jim's departure from Europe and their exit off the cultural stage that provided the space for their love, their relationship and their sensualities. Harry and Jim return to New Zealand and seize the last moments they have together to make love in lifeboat number three cushioned by life-savers. The *Orion* takes the survivors back home: "Men became sick again, just as they had when they had first left New Zealand, but now it was as if everything were happening in swift reverse" (WELLS 2006: 191). The difficulty of leaving for the war in Europe now becomes the difficulty of returning home and the uncertainties about what this 'home' upon arrival might be like.

At this point the running text ends and the closing epilogue in form of a poem begins. The poem tells of the rare encounters of the two men and how once more they are doomed to silence: "they never said a word. / they were home." They never said a word *because* they were home, one might add. The stage upon which Harry and Jim found space for their love vanished with their exit from it and return to New Zealand. Such as so many other individual experiences of World War II, their memory did not find its way into the national narration. National narration favours the memory of a specific kind of masculinity – one specific memory of an event that was elected to be representative of a whole nation and that was deployed to maintain power relations and gender hierarchies and inequalities within genders. Harry and Jim are not the only remainders of war noxiously left alone with their unpronounceable and unpronounced memories:

Many years later  
they would find each other

at the pub  
six o'clock swill  
surrounded by many men  
hectic in their fight  
to remember and forget  
(WELLS 2006: 192)

New Zealand would invest so much energy to pay tribute to the fallen ones of the war, in annual parades, war memorials and Binyonian dedications ("We will remember them!") and so little for the ones who came home to re-incorporate themselves into society, a generation of war-traumatised males handed over to intoxication. Only state-approved protocols of memories would prevail. The survivors are expected to re-integrate into a society whose values they thought to defend and that now demand of them the override of their individual memory with the instalment of one approved version. It is the very world they fought for that forces them into a corset of cultural protocols controlling both their integrities and their memories. The consumption of alcohol and/or drugs is the salvation authenticated by the nation herself (himself?) whereas ironically, the six o'clock swill of males to the local pubs where they tried to get drunk as fast as possible was a result of the government's attempt to inhibit excessive drinking and send the men home to their wives earlier. Sending out such ambiguous protocols, the New Zealand nation-state played its part in exacerbating the plight of post-war masculinities. Harry and Jim keep up "their conversation / body to body, / laughing over this and that [...] and what could never be said." (WELLS 2006: 192) "[C]ultures select what they transmit through memory and history" stated Joseph Roach (1995: 47). Individual memories such as Harry and Jim's experiences of World War II were eradicated from and muted by national narration. An unofficial narration of New Zealand, the unpronounced stories and invisible-ised identities is what Wells detects in "Little Joker Sings". Wells voices what could never be said.

Harry confides to Jim that his teenage son's middle name is Cairo. Their love 'lives on' in Harry's son and in so becomes representative of the future they should have

had together. The story creates a possibility of continuing their love relationship within a cultural setting that does not provide room for homoeroticism. Cairo is where Harry experienced his moment of self-recognition, where for the first time his sensuality gave way to his self. By bestowing his son with the denomination 'Cairo', Harry preserves that one decisive moment in time and space. 'Cairo' denotes not only a locality, it also connotes a specific time frame and a specific cultural context and circumstance. For Harry, 'Cairo' is a discourse. He succeeds in keeping alive his individual memory of World War II against the state-approved national narration of the same event. The word stands for the summation of a huge package of memories and histories that would never find its way into national memory. Harry functionalises in a way his own son, his own flesh and blood, to be the carrier of his legacy, his personal narration of a specific snapshot in his life that proved to be his personal moment of recognition, of *veritas*, to recall Wells' wording. Harry's son through carrying the connotative name becomes the bearer, the walking persistency of his father's personal memory of what happened back then in Cairo.

The disappointment of Harry and Jim about New Zealand hegemonic and mercilessly inhibiting gendered culture pressing the two lovers into heteronormative corsets is not in the story's foreground. Wells' ambition lies in the fundamental attempt to "write back into history" a story of two same-sex lovers and their hidden relationship, their homosexual inclinations that have been elided by the heteronormative forces of historiography and the writing of national narration. Historical precision and political issues play a minor part in Wells' retelling and merely form a vague historical frame for the story. Indeed, at the core of the prosimetric short story lies the personal and sensual memory of an event that has been told over and over again from one ruling perspective only.

The most remarkable achievement in "Little Joker Sings" lies in Wells' success to resuscitate the queer pitch in the New Zealand-dinkum notion of heterosexual

male same-sex *mateship*. Instead of just letting his characters refer to one another as lovers, Wells appropriates the most popular concept of New Zealand vernacular – *mate* – and by placing it in the midst of a homosexual practice or act of love-making of two men empowers it with queer meaning. “Little Joker Sings” is the story of Harry finding his sexuality and identity via the queering of the concept of *mate*. He recognises himself in the homoerotic practice of sexuality: The sexual act and the subsequent love relationship to another man becomes the gateway to his identity.

Cultural historians and sociologists have uncovered many a similar story of homoerotic adventures and love relationships between New Zealand soldiers during both wars, that have not found their way into the national memory of events and that have been doomed to silence and pushed into oblivion. Wells makes amends to the untold, unofficial memories and histories of the New Zealand nation in his historical short story. When in 1997, Hugh Stevens upon reviewing Peter Wells’ and Rex Pilgrim’s anthology *Best Mates* criticised gay literature for its lack of “trace[s] of New Zealand origin” (STEVENS 1997: 347), he did not take into consideration Peter Wells’ successfully provocative queering of the national rugby football team in *A Taste of Kiwi* in 1990 and little could he anticipate Wells’ queer re-writing of New Zealand historiography of World War II in 2006. Peter Wells achieved the queering of three monolithic, seemingly sacrosanct New Zealand national narrations and concepts: the All Blacks, the national narration of World War II and the concept of dinkum *mateship*.

With Harry and Jim, Wells creates what he calls “imaginary ancestors” (1997: 8): “It is the usual act of people establishing themselves to look back, to see who was like them in the past” (WELLS 1997: 8). This is Wells’ way of reformulating what has been said on the formation of national identity: the importance of continuity, of a past to give meaning to the present and cast a hopeful shadow into the future. Peter Wells de facto aims at locating in the past what will provide a present mean-

ing. The invisibility of gay or queer identities and their memories in New Zealand's historiography leads to an unsettlement of gay identities at present and gives them a touch of newness and youth that Wells wants to eliminate by creating imaginary ancestors, by writing Harry and Jim into his narrative. Wells creates continuity from the past into the present and enables a hopeful outlook into the future and rejects concepts of novelty of queer identities established during the 1990s, for instance *Emerging Tribe* by Nigel Gearing. Instead of accepting the established narration of World War II, Wells writes into history a different version of the events to state quite clearly: 'We exist and always have. Acknowledge our existence for now we have a voice and will not be muted!'

## ***3.2 PROUD AND OUT – DOWN IN BROWN: TAKATĀPUI AS MĀORI QUEER IDENTITY***

### **3.2.1 TAKATĀPUI REGAIN'D**

Indeed, the loving of one's own gender is an ancient, even tribal, practice, honourable and revered. (TE AKEKOTUKU 1991: 37)

When Brendan Hokowhitu stated in 2007 that Māori masculinities have been denied the androgynous fluidity that Western masculinities could enjoy (cf. HOKOWHITU 2007: 130), he did not take into account the force of the queer. David M. Halperin, sociologist and literary scholar, has spent many a page on pondering about the discursive positions of sexuality, regularly referring back to Foucauldian concepts, and offered thought-provoking impetus as to how to study sexuality in cultural studies. I would like to use a paragraph from Halperin's academic exchange with Richard Schneider on homosexuality as a cultural construct to set this chapter in motion:

Does the “paederast,” the classical Greek adult, married male who periodically enjoys sexually penetrating a male adolescent share *the same sexuality* with the “berdache,” the Native American (Indian) adult male who from childhood has taken on many aspects of a woman and is regularly penetrated by the adult male to who he has been married in a public and socially sanctioned ceremony? Does the latter share *the same sexuality* with the New Guinea tribesman and warrior who from the ages of eight to fifteen has been orally inseminated on a daily basis by older youths and who, after years of orally inseminating his juniors, will be married to an adult women and have children of his own? Does any of these three persons share *the same sexuality* with the modern homosexual? (HALPERIN 1990: 46)

What Halperin wants to make clear is that none of the four – the paederast, the berdache, the New Guinea tribesman, and the modern homosexual – share the same sexuality, even though all four of them seek sexual encounter with persons of the same sex for different reasons. Since sexuality is culturally constructed and has to be understood within its cultural context, this subject positions cannot simply be umbrella-roofed by the term ‘homosexual’.

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, born in Rotorua in 1949 of Te Arawa, Waikato and Tūhoe descent, writer and prominent Māori feminist and activist,<sup>6</sup> has long been looking for an actual word that has the power to incorporate both ethnic and sexual identity: “[W]e do not have a common, everyday name for us. My challenge is this: we should reconstruct the tradition, reinterpret the oral history of this land, so skillfully manipulated by the crusading heterosexism of the missionary ethic” (TE AWEKOTUKU 1991: 37).

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<sup>6</sup> Ngahuia Te Awekotuku finds literary reference as the character of Roimata, Māori lesbian and activist, in Witi Ihimaera’s novel *The Uncle’s Story*. “Roimata always had a particular strength, a particular vision. It came from her university training in Maori studies, women’s studies and art history – a potent combination that had turned her into an outspoken Maori activist. Add to this her lesbian identity and world, watch out” (IHIMAERA 2000: 131). She talks about the necessity of a Māori queer tribe that has yet to be invented, never interlacing the notion of takatāpui though.

We do not know much about the discourse of sexuality before the colonising forces of the settlers imprinted their protocol upon it, and what we know is understood in the wider Polynesian context rather than the specifically *Aotearoan*: “Pacific peoples from Aotearoa (New Zealand) to the Hawaiian Islands have shared a cosmology in which sexuality is an integral force of life – indeed the cause of the life of the universe – and not a separable category of behaviour and existence” (HALL & KAUANUI 1996: 114). Sexual identity thus meant and means crucial to the formation of cultural identity and identity of existence. Since there was no pan-Māori ‘national’ identity in pre-settler times due to tribal organisation there could not be a general concept of sexuality and gender identity. Hall and Kauanui continue to argue that the very fundamental concept of sexuality as well as its specification of, for instance, homosexuality was imposed upon Pacific peoples by the colonisers; and Eldred-Grigg in his analysis of written missionary reports has found proof that Māori “attitudes were so relaxed that some missionaries were deceived into thinking homosexuality did not even exist” (ELDRED-GRIGG 1984: 47). The very word and meaning of homosexuality seemed absent; therefore the concept of sexuality as European colonisers were taught to see it has to be eradicated in presumptions about the sexual understanding of pre-colonial populations in New Zealand. Furthermore, a clear line has to be drawn between sexual practices and sexual identities. One might sometimes trigger the other, but all in all practice and identity are two different discourses that remain separately comprehensible. Gay identity thus is a modern phenomenon of political discourse, whereas gay practices merely state the involvement in some form of homosexual contact or intercourse not necessarily triggering gay identity.

Te Awekotuku regrets that pre-colonial Māori sexual practices identities and their very performance were henceforth controlled by the hegemony of colonialism.

[T]he practice, the carrying through, the acting out of one’s inner self, even the very acknowledgement of it without the acting out, has meant too often shame, condemnation, dismissal, hatred, ostracism, hopeless-



ness, and despair. The Judaeo-Christian legacy of guilt and punishment, of judgement and mortification has flourished on these islands. Despite the indigenous traditions of the Maori, despite those old, old beliefs, despite their continual rebirthing. (TE AWEKOTUKU 1991: 37-8)

Convinced that same-sex love and companionship are intrinsic to Māori culture and that the continuity has been disconnected by heteronormative forces dogging the process of colonisation, Te Awekotuku attempts to find in her cultural heritage that one, all-embracing terminology to give a name to the negotiation of two identities in one cultural body: an ethnic identity, Māori, and a sexual identity, non-heterosexual or queer. I use the term *queer* in this context because Ngahuia Te Awekotuku has expressed her comfort towards a non-essentialist understanding of the concept; she employs the term in her own writing. Te Awekotuku has had no need to follow the lead of queer of colour analysis or critique because her politics of identity have always pointed toward a double, superimposed manifestation of Māori AND queer. None of her writings reveal the interest to negotiate the concept of queer to express Māori cultural identity because she emphasises queerness in the understanding of sexual practices; Te Awekotuku's definition of queer has no ability to incorporate cultural practices and cultural identity a priori. Her aim is from the outset to locate a word, a linguistic entity, from within her cultural heritage and appropriate it with a new meaning, thus incorporating both the modern understanding of Māori as modern political and cultural identity (mind, the imagination of 'Māori' came only into being through the contact with colonisers) and the modern concept of queer. The craving to at the same time establish a continuity and timeline for the said identity motivates Te Awekotuku to locate a linguistic entity in Māori Polynesian mythology dating from a pre-settler era:

[W]e do have one word, takatapui. And ironically, this word is associated with one of the most romantic, glamorized, man/woman love stories of the Maori world, the legend of Hinemoa and Tutanekai. Tutane-kai, with his flute and his favourite intimate friend, his hoa takatapui, Tiki, and Hinemoa, the determined, valorous, superbly athletic woman – my ancestress – who took the initiative herself, swam the midnight water of the lake to reach him, and interestingly, consciously and deliber-

ately masqueraded as a man, as a warrior, to lure him to her arms. Isn't that another, intriguing way of looking at this story? And isn't that a way which we, our community and tradition, have been denied. (TE AWEKOTUKU 1991: 37)

Apparently, Tutanekai had a companion of the same sex, "hoa [companion] takatāpui [of the same gender]", and smitten Hinemoa realised it was only through cross-dressing or transvestism that her body would find appeal with Tutanekai. Te Awekotuku immediately forms a cultural continuity from the past to the present by proudly adding "my ancestress" when she speaks of Hinemoa.

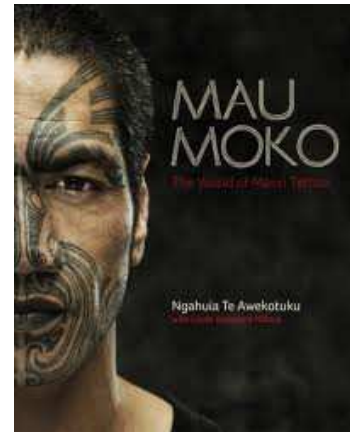
Takatāpui used in Māori mythology differs of course from the understanding people have nowadays when they say 'I am takatāpui'. The mythological 'hoa takatāpui' did not have an implied homosexual bent but rather a homosocial orientation. The modern usage of the term reveals one of a linguistic umbrella for LGBTQIQ practices and gender identities, also including transvestism, and thus a purely modern understanding of queer and not an assumed inherited sexual identity. Queer identity as the main modern alternative to heteronormative understandings of sexual and gender identities has made its way to New Zealand and interlaces complexly with Māori models. Brickell stresses that some people use takatāpui "alongside 'gay' or 'homosexual', while others adopt it as their identity of choice" (BRICKELL 2008: 368). Accordingly, it denotes both gender identity and sexual practices. Takatāpui is thus a term that people may identify as when they identify as both Māori<sup>7</sup> and queer. Takatāpui serves as a form of resistance to double colonisation of both ethnic and sexual identities since it incorporates both and it also as a form of resistance to heteronormative protocol within tribal context. Western concepts of sexuality have come a long way, and even within a tribe homosexuality

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<sup>7</sup> For the sake of focus there shall not follow a discussion on who is qualified to identify as Māori and questions of pedigree; these disputed political issues may find solutions in other places. Also, the terminus is subject to changes in connotation. It was with the arrival of the colonisers that the necessity of a Māori identity arose to draw a line of identification between native Polynesians and European settlers, the Pākehā. Prior to that, affiliation was a tribal one among the peoples of New Zealand.

and other deviations from the Western heteronormativity might be frowned upon. The term denotes a negotiation for an identity that tries to encompass both cultural and sexual identity. The acceptance and range of the term has proved productive because of the term's ability to establish a cultural continuity and adhere to Māori protocol and the importance of whakapapa (genealogy) in constructing identity and affiliation. Since the past gives meaning and justification to the present the term takatāpui calls out: 'We have always been there. And we are here to stay.'

Vic Taurewa Biddle of Tūhoe who is the cover face of Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's illustrated book *Mau Moko* is the bearer of a facial moko and identifies as gay. In an interview that was uploaded on Youtube in 2008 and has since been imbedded on countless websites, Biddle talks about his moko and his takatāpui identity. He states his disappointment about tribal heteronormative bigotry and the assumptions people have because he



has a facial moko: "I get people that are really ugly and say 'You can't be a homo and have a moko on your face'" (min. 2:30, 7.7.2011). The heteronormative assumption that the male warrior bearing a facial moko epitomises heterosexual masculinity is apparently buried deep in the Aotearoan/New Zealand psyche. Biddle goes on to emphasise the concept of companionship of the same sex and the non-sexually orientated-ness of the term takatāpui that, as he states is "the word we use nowadays for ourselves to encompass ourselves. [...] So instead of saying 'I'm a lesbian' or 'I'm a homo', I just go 'He takatāpui ki ahau.' [I have a companion of the same sex.]" (min. 3:45) Biddle explains the umbrella-feature of the term takatāpui to denote identity ("ourselves"). The linguistic switch from English to te reo Māori also signifies the trespassing from one cultural setting to the other. Whereas 'I'm a lesbian' or 'I'm a homo' only denotes one's preferred sexual prac-

tices or sexual identification in a broad modern cultural context, 'He takatāpui ki ahau' links sexual practice within cultural protocol.

### **3.2.2 PERFORMING QUEER MĀORINESS: "QUEEN" (1999)**

There are a number of short stories to be found that deal with the concept of takatāpui and its struggles of identity politics but unfortunately, no short story was to be found that would use the exact terminology of takatāpui.

Anton Blank, of Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Kahungunu, is a writer, activist in the field of Māori child protection and director of the 2008 founded Te Kahui Mana Ririki, organising educational prevention projects against child abuse and violence, and he identifies as queer. He wrote an unusually optimistic short story entitled "Queen" in 1999, in which a Māori boy epitomises and lives out the takatāpui identity with its combined bifocal perspective; he performs Māoriness while at the same time acting out his gay identity proudly. The short story begins with his out-ing at the age of sixteen, impossible to be imagined any smoother:

When he was sixteen a Māori boy called Brendan, living in a provincial town in the hinterland of his people, told his parents he was queer. This public declaration was a formality because at fourteen Brendan had plucked his eyebrows and started to carry his books to school in a kete. (BLANK 1999: 9)

Brendan's plucked eyebrows and accessorising with a kete (flax basket) is a coalescence of Western stereotypical gay behaviour or acting with the open display of Māori cultural belonging. The flax basket is a Māori cultural produce of handicraft that in tribal context would be more likely to be seen dangling on the arm of a Māori woman. With the carrying of the kete, Brendan is recognised as having both Māori tribal affiliation and features of effeminacy. Carrying a 'handbag' and plucking the eyebrows both represent performances normally associated with the fe-

male gender. So, if men are caught performing female stereotypes they are immediately recognised as being queer. Similarly, Brendan's style and behavioural pattern ("behaving like a queen" (BLANK 1999: 9)) immediately gives way to a recognition and acknowledgement in his environment as a queer. His outing is but a "formality".

By behaving like a queen, [...] Brendan pronounced that he would not be held captive by his sexuality, and his whānau and peers bestowed on him an unspoken respect. There was no point taunting someone who clearly had no fear of what was inside him. [...] Brendan felt sure that had he been born to another whānau, he would have been thrashed soundly several times over. (BLANK 1999: 9-10)

Brendan as a character is designed as a blessed being, since any struggle of identity is completely blanked out in the story. He has no need to negotiate his identities, neither his Māori cultural identity nor his queer identity, and feels completely at ease with the combination of them; also, of course, because his whānau (extended family) accepts his choice. Brendan's acknowledgment within his cultural surrounding is clearly only possible within his own whānau and triggered by his certainty and conviction of identification. He is blessed twice: Firstly, his sexual identity is no struggle of negotiations; he knows immediately who he is. Secondly, his environment is an understanding, tolerant and loyal one:

Brendan's four brothers also made it clear that they could be called on if there were any problems. A young queen could be afforded no better protection: they played for the rugby league club, and no one would argue with such high-profile local mafioso. (BLANK 1999: 9)

Brendan's four brothers – poised and able-bodied masculinities (the New Zealand rugby player as quintessentially dominant masculinity) – are through their high position in the body hierarchy empowered to function as benevolent guardians to their brother (at their own will) who might have else been the butt of hatred, ostracism and violence kindled by his queerness.

Brendan's environment liberates him "from the pressures of heterosexual expectations" (BLANK 1999: 9) and he is able to assume at home and in the marae (meeting house and ceremonial grounds) the "roles of the third gender, holding his own in the kitchen" (BLANK 1999: 9). Having the biological sex of the male, Brendan acquires features of the social female gender through his presence in the kitchen, a hackneyed however heteronormative female space. 'Transgender' is what Blank coins "the third gender". Transgender identity as one of the categories subsumed in the term 'queer' placed in a Māori cultural setting leads to the inkling of takatāpui identification, even though Blank does not literally invoke its name. I would like to insinuate here that the character of Brendan is perhaps the first manifestation in Aotearoa/New Zealand short fiction production to embody takatāpui identity by being queer and Māori.

Although blessed with his tolerant environment, Brendan senses the influence of heteronormative expectations on his own life. Knowing only heteronormative microcosms of nuclear family life he fantasises about having children of his own and serving a good-looking man in the enclosed space of a domestic sphere. "This was the one of the only futures he could visualise, surrounded as he was by breeders" (BLANK 1999: 11). Procreation and the continuation of his whānau in the form of mokopuna (grandchild) are celebrated in family rituals in which Brendan feels he cannot contribute to. He longs for sexual contact with boys of his own age but the only other gay men he meets are older Pākehā whose "homosexuality was a curse" (BLANK 1999: 10). Apparently, Pākehā men of the older generation cannot live out their sexuality and the associated practices the way Brendan is able to.

"Brendan did not think of this in terms of Pākehā and Māori behaviour: being queer felt utterly natural but the question of whether his was a Māori experience was esoteric" (BLANK 1999: 10). Let us ponder about what Blank might mean by the notion of "esoteric". The other gay men, all Pākehā, are at ill ease with their sexuality, so it is said. Brendan, however, is in accord with his sexuality *because of*

his cultural background. His smooth outing and the support and acceptance of his whānau grant him the implicitness of his sexual identity. 'Esoteric' has the meaning of both 'secretly hidden' and 'only for insiders', so it has both inclusive and exclusive connotations: the question of whether Brendan's experience of queerness is an explicitly Māori experience can only be understood *within* a cultural setting, *from the inside* of a cultural setting and remains *hidden from* outsiders, the culturally Other. Brendan does not insinuate that the homosexuality of Pākehā men is a curse *because* they are Pākehā; he does not think in cultural dichotomies when it comes to sexuality. His personal experience of sexuality, however, may very well be a distinctly Māori experience. Brendan's sexuality may be a sexuality whose very manifestation is determined by his cultural protocol and subsequent assumptions; his cultural identity gives rise to the specific behaviour and expression of his sexual identity. His performance is not simply a queer one – it is a performance of queer Māoriness! Brendan epitomises *takatāpui* in apolitical sense: His environment grants him both cultural and sexual identities without having to politicise and justify them. He *performs* takatāpui without its political connotation. Although Brendan distinguishes between himself and Pākehā men he does not construct himself in opposition to them. He does not need the Other, the Pākehā men and their sexual curse, to find and construct his own identity as a dichotomy. His Māoriness comes as naturally as his queerness and both are identitarian effects of certain performances, cultural and sexual practices and they are both – as with takatāpui identity – inseparable. His queerness only finds meaning in the context of Māoridom. Takatāpui in Blank's short story may be regarded an 'esoteric' identity, only understood from *within*.

Albeit, Brendan decides to go to Auckland to become a dancer on the grounds of suggestive and promising pictures in gay newspapers and magazines:

Happy, handsome homosexuals and Māori and Pacific Island drag queens beamed out of the pictures taken at gay bars, exhibition openings and dance parties. There was also the occasional smiling politician

and television celebrity with an arm around a glamorous cross-dresser, and Brendan imagined that this was the ultimate gesture of acceptance. (BLANK 1999: 11)

His family paves his way to Auckland and he has job and accommodation before he even arrives there. Māori and Pacific Island women at work become his new family and he starts to refer to himself as “wāhine [woman] from the country” and enjoys being “one of the girls” (BLANK 1999: 13). Away from his hometown, Brendan now fully embraces his identity as a transgender person. Although he spends his first night in a gay bar on his own, the taxi ride home grants him a “painless” initiation into Auckland gay life in form of a middle-aged Samoan driver and his exposed, expectant penis. “‘You dirty bastard,’ Brendan hesitated. What would an Auckland queen do? ‘Do I get a discount on the ride?’” (BLANK 1999: 14).

At this point in the story, the narrative voice changes from a third-person to first-person mode of a nameless, modern gay half-Māori reporting on Brendan’s and his first encounter in a gay bar and Brendan’s subsequent rise as a drag queen performer. From the first verbal exchange the narrator calls Brendan a Māori queen. His performance is thus recognisable within the scene as transgender identity.

The narrator differentiates Brendan’s Māoriness from his own: “Brendan was much more securely Māori than I was. For a start he had two Māori parents and he could speak te reo [the Māori language]” (BLANK 1999: 15). Brendan is as securely Māori as he is queer and the narrator states: “I fed off Brendan’s gay pride and wished that I too could be so brazen” (BLANK 1999: 16). Fascinated by drag queens, Brendan becomes an intriguing drag performer and moves to Sidney, Australia to perform six days a week under his stage name Barbie Q.

The narrator tells of a reunion in Australia years later. They have a fabulous night out, once more the narrator is intrigued by Brendan’s/Barbie Q’s energy and pride,



wished he would too be brave enough to be a queen and is introduced to everyone as being “Swiss-Māori” (BLANK 1999: 17). At dawn, the two men pass a poster outside a nightclub: “Barbie is there, wearing a kōwhaiwhai [scroll ornamentation] one-piece swimsuit, and she has a moko painted onto her chin. Muscled dancers in piupiu [dance kilt] surround her” (BLANK 1999: 17). Brendan as his stage feminine alter-ego Barbie Q poses in a swimsuit printed with Māori ornamentation and wears a moko on her chin – a wāhine moko – the female moko. Muscled dancers as objects of homosexual desires surround her wearing Māori dance kilts. The invention of the figure of Barbie Q as a piece of art, a theatrical act, incorporates features of both sexual and cultural affiliation. Brendan performs drag, which is by its nature non-heteronormative ergo queer (in Te Awēkotuku’s understanding), and his specific theatrical postures and style carry cultural specification. Firstly, Māoriness is literally inscribed on Barbie Q in the form of textile ornamentation and body art. Secondly, Barbie Q is “doing the pūkana” (BLANK 1999: 18), a facial expression of ‘wildness’ through dilation of the eyes and sometimes accompanied by sticking out one’s tongue, usually done when performing a haka or waiata (song). By doing the pūkana, a part of Māori cultural protocol, Barbie Q performs recognisable and stylised Māori behavioural pattern. The narrator starts to ponder about the appropriation and commodification of Māori cultural heritage:

At home I adopted a pretentiously postmodern stance during the debate over Paco Rabanne’s use of the koru [coil], and the Spice Girl’s infamous haka. Live and let live I said, and in this day and age what culture can claim to be truly authentic? We’re all trading cultural symbols left, right and bloody centre. But looking at this poster of Barbie Q doing the pūkana I fell overwhelmed by sadness, and I don’t know why. (BLANK 1999: 18)

The narrator’s “pretentiously postmodern” acceptance of the appropriation of Māori cultural heritage and their commodification is called into question by the figure of Barbie Q, Brendan’s performance of a Māori drag queen. Perhaps he senses the rightfulness and authenticity that accompany both Brendan’s performance of gender as well as cultural identity, and for the first time questions the

adaption of cultural heritage in the postmodern world. He is overwhelmed by a feeling of sadness perhaps as to the loss of his own identity or his inability to perform it. Although he is half Māori he is not acquainted with cultural protocol; he has been part of a modern Western culture. For one part, he lacks the knowledge of his own culture and the conviction to perform it, and for the other part, he does not have the courage to perform his sexual identity. In the figure of Barbie Q he recognises affects and attitudes he desires to do/have himself. Barbie Q is what he could be/do. The act of Barbie Q triggers a sense of nostalgia and woefulness over his lost connection to his cultural protocol and his incapability to act out like Barbie. He adores, even envies, Brendan for his ability to express both cultural and sexual identity in the colourful creation of Barbie Q and the pride with which Brendan steps into both. The narrator has to concede: “Brendan, whom I considered so much more tūruru [real, true] than me, barely acknowledged my Māoriness. Yet there we are, off our faces in Sydney, and it feels like it is the only thing that he wants to find in me.” (BLANK 1999: 18) Barbie Q points out the narrators deficiencies.

Brendan is a character who depicts one possible realisation of the colourful complex of takatāpui actions, patterns and styles. Brendan is Māori and queer and his theatrical act of Barbie Q is one possible stylised and idealised manifestation of takatāpui identity where the two entities have melted into each other: sexual and cultural identity become inseparable. Barbie Q with melting her body into cultural heritage does not express queer and Māori as two sides of a coin, but queer Māoriness as one perfect entity. Barbie Q is thus an idealised, stylised and perfected possible manifestation of takatāpui activities. And even though the author Anton Blank does not mention the terminology, I would still claim Barbie Q as a possible manifestation of the concept of takatāpui. She is the super-takatāpui that can never be accomplished but only approximated; she is the ‘queen’ of the ultimate fusion of sexuality, gender and cultural identity into one and remains a stylised theatrical

act, an identitarian utopia casting optimistic prospects for the action complex of takatāpui.

### **3.3 *THE NO-FUTURE GENERATION: STRUGGLING MALES IN A MODERN WORLD***

#### **3.3.1 (MĀORI) MASCULINITIES, GLOBALISATION, SUICIDE AND QUEER THEORY**

The title for this chapter is partly taken from R.W. Connell's article "Masculinities and Globalisation" which sets the standard for any discussion on masculinities in a globalised and continually globalising world. Globalisation and the change in identity conception and negotiation (a de-concretising, fluidifying and un-settling of once allegedly fixed means for identification) have led to an increased usage of a male protagonist's suicide as a plot device in New Zealand short stories. Queer theory tries to explain in how far suicide and the death drive is a negation of a linear heteronormative understanding of history.

Through technology, the media, the internet, and long-distance flights even New Zealand (in)conveniently placed on the edge of the world has become part of the global village and has long been subject to influence by global struggles, markets, global corporational interest, work migration, and many a cultural produce of transnational character and appeal. In other words, New Zealand cannot possibly succeed in not being part of a globalising world and not defying globalising mechanisms and ascendancies. New Zealand cannot elude the influence of global gendering – even though, as Connell states, entities that spread internationally are treated as "ungendered in principle" (CONNELL 1998: 7). Precisely because of this assumption "such conceptions reproduce the familiar liberal-feminist view of the state as in principle gender-neutral, though empirically dominated by men" (CONNELL 1998: 7). A future of un-genderedness is therefore a utopian imagination. Having this in mind when discussion New Zealand masculinities in a globalising

world, one must also be critical of the homogenising factor of globalisation since it may still vary from nation to nation. Modern society is still but a continuation of the historical creation of colonial empires: "Imperialism was, from the start, a gendered process. [...] The result of this history is a partially integrated, highly unequal and turbulent world society, in which gender relations are partly but unevenly linked on a global scale" (CONNELL 1998: 8). Connell further stresses the symbolisation of gender imagery in mass media; gendering circulation prevalently happens via a medium.

Globalisation, though, may lead to a crisis of national identity as global values start to replace national values. Claudia Bell notices a countermovement to this development. She calls it "vernacular mobilisation" (BELL 2004:177) and describes it as "[a]ffirmation of our specific locality": "Recognition of, and claiming of distinction for, the local values of a small sector of population runs counter to assumptions of mass homogenous culture." (BELL 2004:177) The mobilisation of magical togetherness on a local level – local patriotism or provincialism – is attended by the loss of a magical togetherness on a national scale, a loss of national identity, and simultaneously feeds a collective nostalgia of the once big national narrations. Context determines the realisation of identity politics on a mainly dichotomist exclusiveness: New Zealand versus Australia, Auckland versus Wellington, white collar versus blue collar, men versus women, hetero versus queer and so on. One collective identity is being replaced by many subcultural ones.

With a crisis in national identity comes a crisis in gender identity and vice versa: The reaffirmation of local orthodoxies or provincialisms accompanied by the re-consolidation of local gender hierarchies is a response to the instability caused by a global gender order, the disruption of sexual identities by queer politics and urban intelligentsia that demonstrated new possible forms of masculinity and gender (cf. CONNELL 1998: 16-18). These instabilities committed to a gendered culture,

such as New Zealand, lead to a crisis in masculinity. John Beynon legitimately puts the following questions on the table:

Is the so-called crisis inflicted upon men rather than emanating from them? [...] Are we talking about men-in-crisis or masculinity-in-crisis or both? [...] What is meant by 'crisis' (or are we talking about crises)? What form does it take? What are the causes, as opposed to the symptoms, of the alleged crisis? How does it manifest itself and how is it experienced? (BEYNON 2002: 76)

As evidence for the existence of a crisis he names the following factors typically associated with masculinity: unemployment, inexpressiveness of feelings, loss of status, loneliness, likelihood of heart disease, suicide, crime and violence, underachievement in schools, to name only a few (cf. BEYNON 2002: 77-9). In New Zealand, as James and Saville-Smith have explained graphically, the above mentioned factors are all results of a destructively gendered society so not connected to globalisation at all but rather manifestations of destructive assumptions of gender performance. The 'crisis' or unsettling that globalisation causes to some established gender orders affects only certain masculinities in specific institutions and contexts, of course. Beynon states that specific manifestations of masculinity are in crisis because "they are fearful of exploiting the opportunities that the weakening of patriarchy has created. [...] The only way forward is to demolish the narrow strictures delineating what it is to be a man" (BEYNON 2002: 80). The former certainties of masculinity and their authority have been unsettled and given way to new opportunities to define a more individualistic masculinity (the optimistic) as well as to a sense of being lost within "fearful" masculinities (the pessimistic). The crisis of the personal 'Who am I?' triggers a sense of woeful loss of spirituality in a modern world where bill boards of photoshopped models tell us smirking what we need to find attractive, successful and desirable.

In 2000, Lawrence Jones noticed in a personal mediation on New Zealand cultural identity and literary productions that the short stories dealing with problematic

subcultures within a disturbing, late capitalist consumer society reveal a “catalogue of cultural disasters – unemployment, welfare dependency, drink, drugs, casual and transient relationships, child-abuse, child-desertion, adolescent suicide” (JONES 2000: 9). It does not come as a surprise that literature rather reflects the narratives of the pessimistic – masculinities suffering from sentiments of loss and being lost. A noteworthy number of recent New Zealand short stories close with the male protagonist’s death or suicide after a long desperate struggle to adjust to the requirements of modern society. In my interview, Owen Marshall responds to my question as to why so many authors, including him, decide to let their protagonists die (quite akin to Norman Bilbrough’s response): “It’s always a convenient way to finish a story. [laughs] Have them die – resolution – the end. I suppose part of what those stories are getting at is a disappointment that the society is the way it is” (Interview March 2009). Albeit convenient to let a story end short with a suicide or death (Do novels perhaps have enough room to reflect the successful negotiations of the optimistic?), the sad truth is this:

Approximately 80 per cent of all suicides are by men [...]. Among the 25 to 35 age group, suicide now accounts for nearly 30 per cent of all male deaths and appears to be triggered by relationship problems, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, low self-esteem and mental illness. This grim picture must be contextualised in the overall rise in male suicide of 76 per cent since 1971. (BEYNON 2002: 77)

The males’ failure in society requires drastic retreat on behalf of the men: they choose to die. Death and suicide become the loopholes of struggling masculinities in a modern society and a literarily convenient and expressive means to end a short story.

Queer theory has recently taken an interest in suicide and the death drive and can be used to minister to suicide as a stylised action through the notions of queer negativity, queer rejection of heteronormative understanding of history as a linear narrative, and queer critique on future’s unquestioned good (Edelman 2004; Mu-

ñoz 2010) – conceptualisations that shall find further employment in the following analysis. Edelman intriguingly philosophises about queer theory and the death drive as

refusal – the appropriate perverse refusal that characterizes queer theory – of every substantialization of identity, which is always oppositionally defined, and, by extension, of history as linear narrative (the poor man’s teleology) in which meaning succeeds in revealing itself – as itself – through time. [...] [T]he queer comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure of form. (EDELMAN 2004: 4)

“The queer”, according to Edelman, is somebody who resists the construction of an identity through historical continuity by refusing to take part in what he calls “the Ponzi scheme of reproductive futurism” (EDELMAN 2004: 4). By withdrawing allegiance to the social heteronormative system of reproduction, to “the Child as the emblem of futurity’s unquestioned value and purpose” (EDELMAN 2004: 4), the queer deliberately retracts from being part of the social construct and resists identification according to the heteronormative construct’s protocol.

Although Edelman’s allegation that “the queer” refuses to take part in reproductive futurism may be questioned since the number of queer couples participating in the heteronormative construct of getting married and having children belies Edelman, his philosophy of negativity proves useful when examining suicidal tendencies of modern masculinities: The choice of queer people to die (and/or not to reproduce) is their rejection of heteronormative social constructs that build identity on linearity of historical continuity and the wish to continue further into reproductive futurity. In their rejection lies identitarian power – the power to construct one self in opposition to an Other. Suicide, as a death drive, is one way to perform perhaps the ultimate opposing identity – the no-future, as Edelman reasons.

The link to national identity and suicide is easily established: Since the formation of national identity relies primarily on a continuous national narration of past events to give meaning to the present sense of togetherness and foreshadow a wish for the futurity of a collective identity. The presumption is, however, that there is a wish for futurity. Suicide, therefore, is the clear 'No' to a future (determined by nation-approved narratives). Even though the possibility for a liveable future is guaranteed, for one can only refuse something if it is offered in the first place, the obliteration of one's persona cancels the continuation of identity. This person, choosing a no-future, thus becomes a 'queer'; this person decides not contribute to the heteronormative model of identity and future.

The difficult terrain of suicide read as an act was cautiously acceded by José Esteban Muñoz when he analysed Fred Herko's leap out the window as a queer act, a "performance of radical negativity, utopian in its negotiation of death as ultimate uncontrollable finitude" (MUÑOZ 2009: 167). Suicide is often seen as the ultimate utterance of the end of hope and failure; however, it is also a performance of choice. The possibility of futurity, that has been offered, is neglected and the will for a no-future is ultimately performed – a no-future act coming into effect from the moment of the performer's death. A no-future theatrical act can thus only be manifested with the absolute destruction of the performer; the identity exists merely in the moment of transgression from the stable category life to the stable category death. As suicide is not intended to be a repetitive action, it does not quite fit into Butler's definition of performance, although incidences such as the *Werther effect* and copycat-suicides suggest behavioural suicide patterns that are repetitive, once.

What, one might wonder, does this chapter have to do with New Zealand "magical togetherness" if male protagonists do not want to take part in their community and diminish any possibility for a future magical togetherness?



To start with, suicide is not a modern invention or malady. As observed by John Beynon, there may have been a rise in recorded male suicides since second-wave feminism, but surely there have always been people who chose not to partake of a preconditioned futurity of a specific cultural time and space. Instead of regarding death-driven people as rejecters of collective identity, queer theory has given us the tools to treat them with similar identitarian premise. Second, the connections of masculinities, globalisation and crisis allow investigating suicide not as a transhistorical phenomenon but also within culturally specific discourse. Globalisation, as Connell has suggested, is not to be regarded as homogenising Western cultures equally through monitored economy but rather as a process whose position is a discursive one. Thirdly, suicide can be read as the act of absolute rejection of national narration, of the construct of history upon which present meaning is given or taken. Suicide is the active refusal to acknowledge the decisions that have led to the construction of national narration and the decline of the wish or will to continue in this matter in the future. Globalisation has found its way into national narration and it provided meaning within national narration. Therefore, the rejection of national narration will also lead to the rejection of the process of globalisation within the cultural setting. Suicide as a counteract against the state-authenticated magical togetherness by an active 'No' to the construct itself, on the one hand breaks with tradition and creates in the moment of transgression a new no-future behavioural pattern. Now, whether this no-future act is a New Zealand-specific activity may be contested, but indeed it offers an alternative, albeit short-lived, within specific cultural context and as manifestation of culturally specific historical processes becomes part of a New Zealand counter-narrative.

### **3.3.2 SUICIDE AS IDENTITY PERFORMANCE: "ELI" (2003)**

The short fiction which shall illustrate suicide as a theatrical act of Aotearoa/New Zealand no-future masculinity is Chas Te Runa's "Eli" from 2003. "Eli" is a post-modern tale about a young urban Māori, who struggles with the difficulty of mod-

ern times' lack of spirituality and his lost connection to Māori cultural environment and in the end commits suicide, creating an alternative moment of self-recognition.

The story starts with a schedule of daily ritualised routine from waking up to leaving for work, listing shower, suit and tie, coffee and the first cigarette. Then, we meet the story's first-person narrator:

I am Eli. I'm twenty-six years old, I live in an inner-city apartment, and I work in the private sector. I work fifty or sixty hours each week, go to the gym for two hours every second day, play for the office basketball team and go out with my few friends at least once a week. I [...] wear nice suits, what I'm told are stylish clothes and expensive cologne. I drink imported beer, only go to the right bars and clubs, and am on a first-name basis with most of the right people. I think many would agree that I, pretty much, have it together. (TE RUNA 2003: 189)

This first paragraph conveys the idea of a modern young city dweller who establishes himself as participant of capitalist consumer culture. Money, looks and connections determine his existence. What he has to like and what is "right" is mediated through transnational corporations. Eli is quite a usual wrapper among the flock of a global consumer society.

I am Eli. I smoke too much, and drink quite a bit while alone in the dark. I live alone, and often sit alone in the dark. I stand on my balcony and watch the city's nightlife unfold below me. I watch as the clubs become more and more jam-packed with handsome, stylish young men and beautiful, scantily clad young women, their faces flushed with the Kristov vodka [...] as they anticipate a great night out and the ever-elusive yet ever-attainable prospect of scoring. [...] [I]n this city of more than a million people, no one knows I am here, and no one would know it I was not. (TE RUNA 2003: 189-90)

Standing on his balcony, Eli looks down from a god-like position on consumer culture working its magic in the form of dogmatic sexual freedom and the state-approved anaesthetic and lubricant of social life, alcohol and cigarettes.

I am Eli. I take uppers to get me going in the morning and stay motivated and focused at work. I take downers to relax me and help me to sleep at night. I live on TV dinners and Vanilla Coke [...] and am afraid of the dark. [...] I dream of love, of a beautiful woman who will [...] love me for me. (TE RUNA 2003: 190)

Eli needs drugs to manage his life as part of a consumer culture day and night. His life, it seems, has become a mechanical chain of economically monitored acts, involving transnational corporational items as props which through advertisement have been rendered desirable must-have's. Although accepted member of society, one among many, Eli feels lost. He is afraid of the dark, when he is alone with himself and dreams of love to give him a sense of self and belonging.

After the first three paragraphs that establish Eli as wrapper within a modern, globalised consumer society, the fourth paragraph promises a revelation:

I am Eli. I am neither unusual, nor unique. I am Māori, yet I am not. I am one of a huge number of Māori who neither speak Māori, nor understand Māori ways. I do not know the specifics of my hapū [subtribe], marae [meeting house], whakapapa [genealogy]. I have no knowledge of tikanga [convention] – beyond how to spell it – I am ignorant on treaty issues, or ngā mea [thingy] Māori in general. I know no waiata [song], cannot give my mihi [tribute] – and the only haka I know is that which has been made famous by the All Blacks and taken around the world by drunken backpackers. I sit in movie theatres alone and watch films like *Whale Rider*, and am moved to tears by the sheer beauty of Māori culture, and my yearning to be a part of it. (TE RUNA 2003: 190-1)

Eli is Māori, however, only by name. He does not render the cultural connotation behind the denotation. Eli is a Māori displaced by the influences of urbanisation and global economic conditions. Eli's Māoriness and all that this entails, from tribal organisation to cultural protocol, heritage and styles, has been replaced by a feeling of loss. The only Māori heritage Eli is exposed to are appropriated, commodified simulacra reaching him through popular media (the haka of the All Blacks, *Whale Rider*). Eli has become a consumer of his own cultural heritage. The simula-

cra trigger a sentiment of woe and loss nostalgia at what he could have had and what he could have been. For some economic reason, Eli has abandoned his Māoriness to gain what Pākehā capitalist consumer society tells him is desirable success and happiness. Paradoxically, the simulacra that Eli takes as Māori heritage, the triggers of his sentiment of nostalgia, are but shadows of former glories 'intended for resale' and may only provide nostalgia and comfort but not fulfilment. Urbanisation and economic globalisation has proven destructive to Eli's identity since his past is mere speculation, his present lacks any spirituality and the future does not seem to bring any change. He identifies as Māori, a meaningless category since his actions do not make him recognisable as Māori to his environment and himself. He is unable to 'do' Māori because he lacks the knowledge of the acts that construct Māori identity. City life, global economy and consumer culture have taught him to perform what Connell calls "transnational business masculinity" (cf. CONNELL 1998: 16). This is one form of masculinity that has found productive deployment within the global gender order. Eli's stylised repetition of acts is inherent of a global business masculine identity (drugs, cigarettes, imported alcohol, gym, stylish suits, TV dinners, Coke, expensive cologne, inner city apartment); transnational, that is, as opposed to national. Eli's wish for belonging works however on a national level, a Māori level. Ripped out of his cultural context he lacks the desired cultural continuity upon which to give meaning to the present self. Eli's stylised repetition of acts gives him belonging but not the one he desires. Eli's dilemma is characterised by knowing only one way of 'doing' but longing for another way of 'doing' which remains inaccessible.

I am Eli. If I were more honest, I would probably admit that I have some kind of mental illness or a depression problem – probably... but probably not. I'm OK, really. If I were more confident [...] I would even, perhaps, gain the power to exorcise the Great Aloneness that seems to have become my uninvited roommate, my unwanted companion along this ash-grey road to nowhere that we call life. (TE RUNA 2003: 191)

Eli is OK. His life, his doing, is recognisable as modern transnational business masculinity. Although his doing should provide him with an identity in which he could

also recognise himself, he feels depressed, ill. “The Great Aloneness” is what he calls his sentiment of loss and absence of certain action patterns. He suffers from modern, urban depression about the senselessness of life – senseless because it leads nowhere. He considers himself “OK” because he considers the loss of spirituality ‘normal’ for his urban, modern lifestyle. In a globalised world transnational identities are normalised and naturalised; transnational business masculinity has no cultural specificity, else than Western. This is exactly what Eli longs for, though, cultural specificity and belonging and what his displacement from Māoridom and his whānau, deprives him of.

Looking back into the past, Eli ponders: “The war has been long. It has been one fought not with honour, but for integrity and pride. [...] I have lied and cheated. I have not used the weapons that good men use” (TE RUNA 2003: 192). Eli nostalgically evokes a war and wishes for a continuity leading up to the present. Eli is not part of this specific narrative because he has broken with tradition (or was broken with tradition?) and used inappropriate, deceitful weapons. “Along the way I have lost one of the few things I never expected to lose – my sense of self. I have fought so long, transformed myself so completely that I no longer know who I am” (TE RUNA 2003: 192). Eli’s conclusion is that the identity he performs, transnational business masculinity, is not the one he wants to be recognised as for this identity appears to be lacking spirituality. He lives in a city apartment, wears designer clothing, smokes and goes to the gym, hypocritically, goes out for drinks with his friends to score, consumes his own cultural background in the movie theatres. To his environment he will be recognisable as somebody who ‘has it together’, but within himself he feels that beneath the skin, the business top layer, there is emptiness. Eli senses not only the absence of belonging but also the process of losing something in the past. What he has lost is his future hope for a belonging: Coming from a specific cultural background and class he tells himself “that it is amazing that I did not end up in a gang, thus, in prison. Yet... and yet, with the gang would come a sense of belonging, that sense of whānau that draws so many young people

in” (TE RUNA 2003: 192). In the Māori past, the future looked dangerous but offered him a sense of belonging. Now, in his urban, consumer culture present the future is empty because there is nothing that gives him meaning in the present. For Eli, a displaced Māori, a Māori past could have awarded him a Māori present and a vague but meaningful future of Māoriness. But he is unable to return to Māoridom.

The last day of Eli’s life is yet another stylised repetition of acts, “hypocrite” he calls those acts, ‘completely naturalised paradox’ of consumer culture we might want to call them: “In true hypocrite style I have spent two hours at the gym – only to smoke my last three cigarettes straight after” (TE RUNA 2003: 195). Eli gets in his car and heads off:

8.28 p.m. Car finds its feet: 100, 110, 120, 130

8.29 p.m. Approach the bend. See the lights of the city set against the gathering darkness of the twilight sky. The first stars are already visible in the dying light of the sun: 140, 150, 160. The car screams its protest as we near the bend.

I am Eli. The sun is dying and the night is come alive. The sky has never seemed so close. The Great Aloneness is still at my house, I imagine I see him leaning forward, gripping the rail of my balcony. He did not know I was leaving; he thought I would be home soon. He did not get a chance to get into the car with me. The car still screams in torment, 170, 175, it can give no more. I am Eli. I am Eli, and I am going to touch the sky. (TE RUNA 2003: 196)

As the sun is dying above the city lights, Eli kills himself. He has left the Great Aloneness in his city apartment. Eli engages in an absolute act without any negotiations or uncertainties. It is the decision to die that gives him belonging because he has a clear and certain future ahead of him. And although this future brings about the obliteration of his persona, it provides him with a goal for this short-lived moment. Eli’s suicide is a act of passage and transgression: he does not convey the idea of simply the will for self-destruction. He wants to touch the sky. And his will to touch the sky demands an act of self-annihilation. Because transnational busi-

ness masculinity does not provide him with spirituality and Māori is out of his reach, Eli can only solve his dilemma by an utterance of negativity and refusal. The moment of self-killing gives him a path/space by creating futurity, certainty of where he is going – the sky. For the lack of spirituality in his life, Eli performs his suicide as moment of high spirituality, the transgression from the state of life to the state of death. And he does so by speeding his car to the limit. He sets his body in motion and literally moves his body from earth to sky.

Eli's suicide is an active refusal to participate in a futurity determined by hegemonic imaginations. The national narration of New Zealand and the fusion of globalisation into this national narration are not acknowledged by Eli at all. He completely withdraws from a possible magical togetherness. His future is empty, as his present is but loss and absence. By attempting to touch the sky, Eli creates for himself a spiritual futurity beyond the deceitful circle of capitalist consumer culture and urban mindset. That he may never actually reach the sky is of no importance; it is the will and intention that gives Eli a meaning, a path.

The short story "Eli" is only one among many dealing with the loss of spirituality as a feature of Māori masculinities in a modern consumer society and urban settings. People have learned to adapt to the demands of modern Western society but through this run the risk of losing connection to their past, and with it their meaning of the present and outlook into a futurity. The transgression from Māori world-making to the allurements of consumer society comes at a high price. Some of Witi Ihimaera's stories convey a similar picture of young modern Māori struggling to juggle their cultural identity and modern life in the cities. In their urge to survive and achieve in a Pākehā dominated and gendered world their cultural identity is compromised on the way. A great amount of melancholy and woefulness is attached to the imagination of young Māori becoming estranged from their cultural background in order to be successful in a Western hegemonic realm.

In the literature by male Māori authors, such as Witi Ihimaera and Chas Te Runa, the focus is on male Māori struggling with their cultural and sexual identities. Too often, society holds up a defect mirror to reflect what are considered Māori masculinities' deficiencies and inadequacies within Western urban settings. The nostalgia and melancholy tied in with the loss of identity and "home" is a strong aftertaste that lingers on. The characters' chances to find meaning in their lives and identity – the chances to be recognised – are only possible through re-establishing their past. Their cultural identity subsequently gives meaning to their gender identity.

"As we all become part of a world of postmodern media consumption culture maybe we become more the same and maybe the fiction demonstrates this" (JONES: Interview March 2009). "Eli" exhibits the destructiveness of vices of urban consumption culture. He is a "statistic". He has become a number on a page, a barcode and consumes his own cultural heritage through popular media. He lacks the language and the knowledge to perform Māoriness. He is lost in woefulness and melancholy about what he might have been and what he might have had. He lives his life in the subjunctive but longs for a past, a present and a future that are all a linear continuity – his life has become unliveable. The solution to his dilemma is indeed the act of self-destruction as the only way to withdraw his body from hegemonic maelstrom and perform absolute rejection of the offered version of futurity along state-approved lines and economic dictation. He creates his own individual identitarian foundation by taking all the lost spirituality back in one movement – in his attempt to touch the sky. While the mantric repetition of the phrase "I am Eli" reveals Eli's attempts to negotiate his identity throughout the story, in the end it finally conveys his track, his space in motion. "I am Eli, and I'm going to touch the sky."



## CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

My thesis started out from the thesis that New Zealand national narration stresses the masculinity of national events. It is the 'state-approved' masculine memory that is recognised by members of the nation as the basis upon which a collective 'magical togetherness' is forged – a national fraternity. The production of so-called 'cultural products of nationalism' is a means to naturalise and promote these memories and narrations. The New Zealand short story, as indeed the genre where New Zealand writers of both colonial and postcolonial times have distinguished themselves and found their voice, and the genre that enjoys highest possible popularity with both reader- and authorship, has proven congenial to an analysis of gender and cultural identity. The New Zealand short story is as such a cultural product of nationalism. By Butlerian understanding, national/cultural identity as well as gender identity is performative: it is recognisable as stylised repetition of acts. All these considerations connect literature studies to postcolonial, gender and performance studies. I have analysed male characters in selected New Zealand short stories through these afore mentioned theoretical lenses. I aimed my thesis at the linkages between gender identity and an understanding of New Zealandness/Māoriness. I analysed the numerous representations of New Zealand masculinities in thirteen short stories by male authors between 1937 and 2007 and tried to uncover how their performances are linked to New Zealand cultural identity and national narration. In so doing, my dissertation examined how the masculinities reproduce national identities, break with traditions and invent new formations. Showing that New Zealand masculinities are the effect of specific cultural and historical processes or even the response to these effects, this dissertation explored different discursive positions of masculine gender identity as well as their masculine arenas in New Zealand short fiction.

In the first part of my thesis 'Imitating Tradition' I have analysed how the characters' actions in short stories by A.P. Gaskell, O.E. Middleton, Renato Amato, Owen Marshall and Witi Ihimaera re-established certain traditions and thus made the characters be recognised as 'traditional' New Zealand male identities. The characters might experience struggles and negotiations within their identitarian blocks but nonetheless, the traditional and hegemonic model was maintained. I see these manifestations as *direct* results of historic and social processes in New Zealand.

A.P. Gaskell's "The Big Game" illustrated how the culture and mythology around New Zealand rugby football recreates and stabilises certain imaginations of masculinity. Rugby is a male-only arena where subordinate masculinities, women and children are pushed into the roles of loyal supporters and spectators. The jargon of rugby football reveals obvious connotations of sexual aggression towards and the degrading of the opposing team by assigning traits of femininity. In this story, the New Zealand rugby player and his cultural stage may well be denoted misogynist and homophobe. This a disturbing discourse of the rugby football arena, considering its importance in New Zealand and New Zealand national identity formation; because indeed if rugby players are the 'agents of the nation' then on the nation the same attributes are or were foisted. I suggest that queer readings of texts on rugby culture in New Zealand are long overdue and beckon to further research. Gaskell's story proves fertile ground for homoerotic appeal (steaming male naked bodies in the changing room). Even though the discourse of New Zealand rugby football is a hyper-heterosexual one and allegedly has no homoerotic implication whatsoever, Peter Wells and his short film project *A Taste of Kiwi* leads on the successful path of queering rugby culture.

O.E. Middleton's character Tony in "A Married Man" tried to jump the cataclysm from the Man Alone to the Family Man. He has a difficult time following the image of the Man Alone when all he wants to do is be able to mourn his dead baby boy. His environment does not allow him certain behaviour and forces him to engage in

rehearsed, repetitive acts (in the pub as space typically associated with masculinity) to re-establish his masculinity and be recognisable again as a man, the 'traditional' Man Alone. The fact that he engages in these acts 'by necessity rather than choice' passes unnoticed by other men and lays bare the cultural corset in which Tony is laced. There is indeed no room for deviance.

Renato Amato, the only 'Eye-tie' in this thesis, did well in his story "One of the Titans" in providing a manual of how one may become a New Zealand pioneer, roaming the countryside, turning wilderness into the land of milk and honey. The speech and behavioural patterns of this masculinity in pioneering working camps, which seems shockingly anachronistic considering the story is set in the 1960s, are easy to mimic and Guiliano as the subaltern masculinity luxuriates in his ability to choose whether he wants to conform to the *doing* of the pioneers or not. Even though in the end he decides to stay true to his self, he offers a manual that makes clear that everyone sticking to certain activities and styles is able to be 'one of them'.

Owen Marshall gave a benevolently satirical account of Tucker, the Man Alone, trying to fit into his newly acquired role of the Family Man in "Heating the World". Tucker, behaving literally like a 'solid' Man Alone in harmony with the landscape, is doing his best to understand the fluidity and ephemerality of newly purchased femininities in the form of his wife and her three daughters. The Family Man identity requires Tucker to abandon 'good old' behaviours and habits and his milk cow, and adopt instead a completely new set of values. According to him, his quiet life of a Man Alone has ended and the cacophony of the Family Man has begun.

The last story in 'Imitating Tradition' was Witi Ihimaera's "Ask the Posts of the House" (2007), and it is also the most recent of the stories in this thesis. Here, Uncle Aaron as 'traditional' Māori patriarch is able to get away with committing incest

with his daughter because his domination has caused the extended whānau to justify his action through the creation of narratives around it and authenticate them through inventing continuity to fictional 'traditional' Māoridom. The only masculinity to challenge his authority is Isaac's subaltern but ultimately 'stronger' Māori business masculinity. Being crippled by a clubfoot from birth on, Isaac sees his only chance of achieving power through being educated in the Pākehā world and learning how to do things in the money world. 'Traditional' Māori patriarchy is handed over to obsolescence and a new educated patriarch takes his place. Also, the discourse of violence is treated in two 'traditionally' colonial notions: 'noble' and 'ignoble' Māori male violence – the latter being, of course, written across Uncle Aaron's expression of masculinity. This story retells the problematic solution that dysfunctional Māori patriarchy may be enlightened and overcome through the incorporation of Western values. For further research I suggest that an in-depth examination of the depiction of the marae, the Māori meeting house, could prove fertile to those preoccupied with research on gendered spaces within Māori cultural context.

The second part of my thesis has illustrated manifestations that present *reactions* to results of historic and social processes in New Zealand. These reactions question many a discourse that has been crafted into a tradition over the years. The authors that I felt were most convincing in their endeavour are Frank Sargeson, Graeme Lay, Norman Bilbrough and of the 'filial' generation, Carl Nixon and William Brandt.

Frank Sargeson is considered the first national writer of New Zealand and it is interesting to see how his narratives have influenced the construction of the New Zealand male. I have chosen to analyse a story that challenges dominant manifestations of masculinity based on physical virility and the notion of hubris that is associated with it. "A Great Day" is also the earliest story in this thesis, dating from 1937. Within the masculine space of the fishing dinghy, bulky New Zealand mascu-

linity is both desired and destroyed. Through the employment of 'safe' New Zealand concepts (mateship) and the eventuality of able-bodied-ergo-powerful New Zealand understanding, the less 'manly' man succeeds in deceiving the dominant bloke and lets him drown. Dominant masculinity based on physical virility is depicted to trigger hubris that might prove dangerous, even lethal, to its bearer.

In "The Island", first published in 1985, Graeme Lay offers a rendering that might be perceived 'Man Alone Failure masculinity'. The third-person male protagonist wished to get rid of the female antagonist to finally be on his own. But when he accidentally does get into the situation of solitude on an island that turns out to be a (life-threatening) bird sanctuary, he proves unable to succeed in actions that were epitomised by the concept of the Man Alone. Every action he endeavours ends in failure.

In contrast to "The Island", William Brandt staged a successful heroic battle reenactment in "Rat" (1999). Perry, the warrior (in his imagination), engages in a bloody battle with a rat in his ex-girlfriends kitchen invoking randomly gathered stylistic actions of an imagined past. Armed with his grandfather's sword from World War I, he sets out to first kill the beast and then make love to the damsel in distress. His failure in the first task brings about his inability to perform the second. Brandt narrates in the style and structures of mock heroic, deploying linguistic entities of grandeur to describe the mundane "killing" procedure with humorous effect. The very act of establishing a present identity based on perceived identities and glories of the past is mocked, and in so basically New Zealand national identity in general.

Norman Bilbrough made Martha fall in love with the grotesque body of Les in "Man with Two Arms" (1991). Through the eyes of Martha, the only female main character in all of the chosen short stories, we question dominant rugby war bloke mas-

culinity and discover that Martha's husband's compensatory masculinity is less attractive to Martha than the grotesque, societally scorned one. In order to stabilise the strict gender separation in post-war New Zealand society, her husband engages in compensatory acts that prove cruel and unappealing to the main character. When she meets Les, the grotesque masculinity, she falls in love and we understand how a lesser, desolate masculinity (by 'traditional' New Zealand standards) can still be the one free from societal expectations.

Finally, Carl Nixon offers an allegorical story of an emancipating generation of sons in "Weight" from 1999. Through the alignment of physical virility of father and son and ultimately the son's *outdoing* of the father, the son is able to emancipate from the father, receive his initiation not for *admission* into but rather *demission* from dominant discourse of 'traditional' New Zealand masculinity.

The third part of my thesis 'Creating New Traditions' has shown several interesting tides in short story production and their sometimes cautious, sometimes loud altercation with national narration and their movement beyond to explore new realms and possibilities. These manifestations present formations built on the base of historic and social processes in New Zealand, opening up new means for identification that assemble concepts of postcoloniality, sexual liberation and pride, and unfortunately also despair and self-annihilation in light of loss of spirituality in the age of globalisation. Peter Wells, Anton Blank and Chas Te Runa are the illustrative authors for this part.

"Little Joker Sings" has brought about the queering of the concept of the New Zealand 'mate' through appropriation and re-contextualising of the New Zealand-inherent, linguistic entity 'mate' in a historical short story. Peter Wells both establishes historical continuity for New Zealand queer identities by making possible a queer connotation of 'mate' and is exemplary for future rewritings of national nar-

ration. The trend to rewrite New Zealand's past results in the voicing of Other national memories. The unofficial narration of the nation is where interest and emphasis is put on, not so much in order to destructively rip apart monolithic state-approved memories of New Zealand's past, but rather to give meaning to modern identities and understandings of self. Also, of course, there is a political interest and activism in giving voice to memories muted by state-authenticated narrations and adds to a modern perception of multiple identities.

Similarly, Māori activists have made room for the possibility for a queer Māori identity by the appropriation of an available category from pre-colonial Māori mythology and bestowing it with both cultural affinity and the modern understanding of queerness. Takatāpui serves as identitarian umbrella to encompass queer as well as Māori identity. And even though the term itself has not gone down into short story production yet, it may well be only a matter of time until it starts to appear. Takatāpui sates the wish for a collective past to give meaning to the present and guarantee a liveable future. It is also political in depriving its bearers of their vulnerability to double-colonisation in the dual-form of ethnic and sexual discrimination. And, quite like Peter Wells' attempt in "Little Joker Sings", takatāpui gives voice to a narrative that has been silenced in the process of puritan settlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The short story "Queen" by Anton Blank, as I have shown, illustrates one possible enactment of the concept of takatāpui.

Lastly, I have argued for incorporating no-future identity and suicide as an act of rejection of predestined futurity in this work on New Zealand masculinity. Although suicides have always happened, one might regard the act of self-destruction in times of globalisation and the hegemonic imagination of transnational business masculinity as a way of identity-formation, however short-lived. Suicide as an utterance of withdrawing one self from the social structure and reproductive futurity is useful in the discussion of the short story "Eli" by Chas Te Runa. The young displaced urban Māori manifests through the act of self-

obliteration a certain future that gives him meaning in the moment of his killing and serves as the only solution to his dilemma of the loss of soul and spirituality in transnational business masculinity and the incapability to establish an identity through Māoridom. His loss of belonging can only be healed in the precise moment of transgression from life to death. Albeit a moribund and destructive one, Eli's no-future enactment may be viewed as a manifestation of identitarian results of specific processes: Economic globalisation and the subsequent pressures of consumer culture, the urbanisation of Māori and subsequent disruption of inherent structures crucial to the formation of Māori cultural identity have led to Eli's sentiment of loss (of soul, of spirit, of self as he says). Eli's suicide is the act of absolute rejection of what national narration offers him as possible and desirable futurity. The productivity and potentials of such a construction, however, cannot be identified yet.

What, then, may we conclude from this research?

As my work has illustrated, genderedness of New Zealand national narration and cultural understanding is omnipresent in New Zealand short fiction, from the early twentieth century all the way up to recent times. Although the characters in the short stories are fictional the sentiments they encompass repeat the heartbeat of the respective cultural hour in which they are cast. The short stories reveal to us that still, national/cultural identity is a masculine arena in New Zealand that insists on its exclusive spaces and complex of activities and that it is still constantly renegotiated in the literature. The imitation of more 'traditional' manifestations of New Zealand masculinity is as frequent as their deconstruction. As to the new inventions and creations that might empower new traditions, one has to acknowledge their relative recency. The stories have all been published post 1990, thus incorporating conceptualisations triggered by second-wave feminism, the rise of postcolonial and Indigenous studies, queer liberation movements and globalisation. Lawrence Jones made a (perhaps rebuttable?) presumption in my interview: "As we all



become part of a world postmodern media consumption culture maybe we become more the same and maybe the fiction demonstrates this” (Interview March 2009). This allegation is closely akin to what he predicted in the years 2000 to be the bleak future of New Zealand literature as far as the literature’s ‘New Zealandness’ was concerned. He meditates upon the annual literary output of the Montana Book Award:

[T]hey are not much concerned with a contemporary New Zealand identity of the lack of it, especially those by the younger writers, and the identity that they do present, although certainly more pluralist and accepting than the puritan one, is neither very coherent nor very New Zealand. The older writers [...] tend to agree with the Provincial writers’ view of it, although they may put more emphasis on its male dominance and its homophobia. [...] The emphases differ, but most of the contemporary writers seem to agree, at least implicitly, that New Zealand is part of an international late capitalist culture [and] tend to accept that international culture as a given, with little sense of history or possible alternatives, and with no clear moral position beyond a kind of post-modern relativistic tolerance. (JONES 2000: 11)

In 2007, Jenny DeBell similarly wrote in a review of several short story collections published over the year that “with the exceptions of recurring references to the All Blacks, certain unmistakable vocabulary, and descriptions of tropical scenery, there is little that makes theses stories recognisably New Zealand” (DEBELL 2007: n.p.).

With all these considerations in mind, it is difficult to predict what is yet to come. The engagement in any attempts to prospect starts with the acknowledgement of New Zealand as part of the global world and its influences on the formation of identities. Connell comments upon the status quo:

What happens in localities is affected by the history of whole countries, but what happens in countries is affected by the history of the world. Locally situated lives are now (indeed, have long been) powerfully influenced by geopolitical struggles, global markets, multinational corpo-

rations, labor migration, transnational media. It is time for this fundamental fact to be built into our analysis of men and masculinities. (CONNELL 1998: 7)

I do not accept this bleak outlook that New Zealand literature and identities will be overrun and evaporated by the force of globalisation. After all, recent short story production has revealed new trends that still encompass sentiments of fraternal 'magical togetherness' that are recognisably New Zealand. And new provincialist/local patriotic tendencies may only make sense in a New Zealand national context. New Zealand literature still imitates national characteristics, breaks with them and uses them as a basis to forge new ones.

Queer renderings of New Zealand's past have and hopefully will continue to shed new light and different shades of the spectrum on New Zealand's past, its constructedness, and on imaginations and discourses of sexual and cultural identity formations. If we consider that Frank Sargeson, the writer who gave New Zealand literature its first 'being', was an articulate homosexual who coincided with the creation of a national collectiveness, perhaps it is the queer writers' time yet again to create a "new country of the soul – a wider embrace of humanity which lies at the utopian heart of any new society" (WELLS 1997: 17). The 'upgradability' of the term 'queer' secures its futurity in New Zealand writing.

Or will it be the Pacific writers distinguishing themselves in the creation of a New Zealand that acknowledges its geographical position in the South Pacific and its role in the narrating of the Pacific to a greater extent? DeBell adjudicates to Pacific writing the same significance as globalising influences: "A strong global identity is becoming the necessary future of writing, I think, though plenty of the strongest writers collected here have anchored their characters in the Pacific Islands" (DEBELL 2007: n.p.).

Māori identity as colonial imagination has a structure of its own and works at times in seemingly self-contained processes. It might perhaps therefore be secured in esoteric realms. Owen Marshall said about Māori identities in my interview: “The Maori New Zealanders are lucky; their culture is the same shape as the country” (Interview March 2009). Even though Marshall emphasises the ‘luck’ of Māoridom to be planted on an incredibly resilient cultural narrative that allegedly binds them closer to the country than later settlers, they are still exposed to exterior influences that might be derogatory to their cultural concepts:

The export of European/American gender ideology can be seen in the mass media of the developing world. [...] For the first time in history, there is a prospect of all indigenous gender regimes foundering under this institutional and cultural pressure. Some gender configurations have already gone. (CONNELL 1995: 199)

Māori activists have proven, though, that their imaginations have the fluid potential of resurrection and further movement and change within esoteric realms. New, flamboyant imaginations such as the creation of the takatāpui concept render unique features and cater for many an individual to recognise themselves.

The question that poses itself after these observations: Is there a need for a *new* New Zealand ‘national’ identity? This common destiny that is crucial for the construction of a national identity, oriented towards the future rather than simply the past – is it, important? What happens, once New Zealand’s monolithic, normative past and the memory of it has been fully deconstructed? Will New Zealandness disappear into the veils of oblivion? What will take over?

Even though global culture and mass-mediality do not seem to be able to satisfy the desire for what Edith Turner called ‘magical togetherness’, they play a major role in triggering the renewal of provincialist, ethnic or sexual ‘nationalisms’. Hip-pie-esque multiculturalism seems to proclaim such a high level of tolerance (live

and let live) that the 'magical togetherness' may shrink to the smallest available entity: the individual. Looking at the history of humanity though, we see that people have always striven for collectiveness, aspects in others in which they could recognise themselves. In the case of New Zealand and its depiction in literature, the collectiveness that was striven for proved diligently exclusive, dysfunctional corsets to both feminine and masculine identities and came at a high cost for the whole society. Is this what magical togetherness means? We wave good-bye to the 'nation' as an appropriate construct of identification in the twenty-first century. This magical togetherness that seems to be solely celebrated in the areas of sports, religious blood feud, deleterious microcosms that are authenticated by political motivation to separate more than they bring together in collective sentiments, that have been employed ever so often to fuel hatred rather than tolerance, is moribund. Anthony D. Smith begs to differ:

[D]espite the capacity of nationalisms to generate widespread terror and destruction, the nation and nationalism provide the only realistic socio-cultural framework for a modern world order. They have no rival today. National identity too remains widely attractive and effective and is felt by many people to satisfy their needs for cultural fulfilment, rootedness, security and fraternity. (SMITH 1995: 159)

Acknowledging the human need to identify with and recognise oneself in a specific manifestation of being in order to live a liveable life, the New Zealand nation-state has to promote fiercely the multiple ways of identification and drop its unhealthy genderedness on the path. In the year 1924, Otto Bauer pronounced what is still true and valid: "The nation for us is no longer a rigid thing, but a process of becoming" (BAUER 1924/1996: 56). Thus by definition, collective identities such as the ones thoroughly discussed in this thesis always perpetuate and never come to an end. They are dissected, coloured, despised, supplanted, hammered, bullied around in literature – motion becomes their nature. The ability to change and be reinterpreted will prove to be the survival skill of 'magical togetherness'. It would be folly to predict that New Zealand literature will drop the discourse of national identity altogether, since negotiation and movement are certainly the crucial aspects of

identity formation that all short fictions share. One does not have to be particularly brave to predict that identity negotiations and reinterpretations of such 'nationalisms' will remain.

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## ***APPENDIX***

### ***ABSTRACT (DEUTSCH)***

Die Neuseeländische Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte betont vehement die Männlichkeit - die Maskulinität - der Geschichte, Literatur- und Kulturproduktion Neuseelands. In meiner Dissertation analysiere ich die zahlreichen Repräsentationen von Maskulinitäten in Neuseeländischen Kurzgeschichten von männlichen Autoren und untersuche, in welchem Konnex diese mit Neuseeländischer Kulturidentität stehen.

Ausgehend von den interdisziplinären Methoden der Postkolonial Studien, der Kulturwissenschaften und der Gender Studies erforsche ich, wie Neuseeländische Maskulinitäten in den ausgewählten Kurzgeschichten von den Charakteren portraitiert und vorgetragen werden und in wie fern ihre kulturelle Performanz nationale Identität darstellt und widerspiegelt. Mein Projekt eruiert die zahlreichen Realisierungen von neuseeländischen Maskulinitäten in Kurzgeschichten und beabsichtigt, die Knotenpunkte und Verflechtungen zwischen Geschlecht und nationaler Identität und deren Verwirklichung und Darstellung in der Literatur aufzuzeigen. Da Neuseeländische Maskulinitäten die Manifestationen und Auswirkungen von spezifischen kulturellen und historischen Prozessen sind, darauf reagieren und auf ihnen aufbauen, erforscht meine Arbeit die unterschiedlichen Diskurse und Diskurspositionen von Neuseeländischen Maskulinitäten.

Meine Dissertation ist – ausgehend von Literatur als kulturelles Produkt von Nationalismus – ein literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliches Projekt, wie auch ein Bei-

trag auf dem Gebiet der Gender Studies. Meine Arbeit zeigt, dass sich Neuseeländische Maskulinitäten als Ergebnisse unterschiedlicher historischer, soziologischer, kultureller und Geschlechter-Diskurse manifestieren.

***ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)***

In my thesis I analyse the multiple representations of (male) masculinities in New Zealand short stories by men, investigating in what ways they are linked to New Zealand cultural identity.

Using the interdisciplinary methods of postcolonial, cultural and gender studies, I investigate in what ways masculinities are portrayed and performed by the characters in the short stories, and I will look at how their cultural performances express New Zealand identity and national narration. Looking at the different ways male authors imagine New Zealand masculinities, my project examines the relations and linkages of what makes masculinities explicitly New Zealand and how they are shaped and imagined in short stories. Showing that New Zealand masculinities are the effect of specific cultural and historical processes or their reaction to them, my study explores the different discursive positions of New Zealand masculinities.

My dissertation is – literature as cultural product of nationalism – as much a cultural project as it also contributes to the field of gender studies, showing that New Zealand masculinities are in themselves manifestations of results of discourse. The selected short fictions are representative of the existing diversity and dissimilarity of New Zealand masculinities.

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- 3/2009 Vortrag an der University of Otago zum Thema der Dissertation im Rahmen der monatlichen Seminarreihe des Centre for Research on National Identity am English Department: Work in Progress: „‘Kiwi’ Masculinities in New Zealand Short Stories“
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